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BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NORFOLK BROADS.



THE little group gathered together in Major Milroy's parlour to wait for the carriages from Thorpe-Ambrose would hardly have conveyed the idea, to any previously uninstructed person introduced among them, of a party assembled in expectation of a picnic. They were almost dull enough, so far as outward appearances went, to have been a party assembled in expectation of a marriage.

Even Miss Milroy herself, though conscious of looking her best in her bright muslin dress and her gaily-feathered new hat, was at this inauspicious moment Miss Milroy under a cloud. Although Allan's note had assured her, in Allan's strongest language, that the one great object of reconciling the go-

verness's arrival with the celebration of the picnic, was an object achieved, the doubt still remained whether the plan proposed—whatever

it might be—would meet with her father's approval. In a word, Miss Milroy declined to feel sure of her day's pleasure until the carriage made its appearance and took her from the door. The major, on his side, arrayed for the festive occasion in a tight blue frock-coat which he had not worn for years, and threatened with a whole long day of separation from his old friend and comrade the clock, was a man out of his element, if ever such a man existed yet. As for the friends who had been asked at Allan's request—the widow lady (otherwise Mrs. Pentecost) and her son (the Reverend Samuel) in delicate health—two people less capable, apparently, of adding to the hilarity of the day could hardly have been discovered in the length and breadth of all England. A young man who plays his part in society by looking on in green spectacles, and listening with a sickly smile, may be a prodigy of intellect and a mine of virtue, but he is hardly, perhaps, the right sort of man to have at a picnic. An old lady afflicted with deafness, whose one inexhaustible subject of interest is the subject of her son, and who (on the happily rare occasions when that son opens his lips) asks everybody eagerly, "What does my boy say?" is a person to be pitied in respect of her infirmities, and a person to be admired in respect of her maternal devotedness, but not a person, if the thing could possibly be avoided, to take to a picnic. Such a man, nevertheless, was the Reverend Samuel Pentecost, and such a woman was the Reverend Samuel's mother; and, in the dearth of any other producible guests, there they were, engaged to eat, drink, and be merry for the day at Mr. Armadale's pleasure-party to the Norfolk Broads.

The arrival of Allan, with his faithful follower, Pedgift Junior, at his heels, roused the flagging spirits of the party at the cottage. The plan for enabling the governess to join the picnic, if she arrived that day, satisfied even Major Milroy's anxiety to show all proper attention to the lady who was coming into his house. After writing the necessary note of apology and invitation, and addressing it in her very best handwriting to the new governess, Miss Milroy ran upstairs to say good-by to her mother, and returned, with a smiling face and a side-look of relief directed at her father, to announce that there was nothing now to keep any of them a moment longer indoors. The company at once directed their steps to the garden-gate, and were there met face to face by the second great difficulty of the day. How were the six persons of the picnic to be divided between the two open carriages that were in waiting for them?

Here, again, Pedgift Junior exhibited his invaluable faculty of contrivance. This highly-cultivated young man possessed in an eminent degree an accomplishment more or less peculiar to all the young men of the age we live in—he was perfectly capable of taking his pleasure without forgetting his business. Such a client as the Master of Thorpe-Ambrose fell but seldom in his father's way, and to pay special but unobtrusive attention to Allan all through the day, was the business of which young Pedgift, while proving himself to be the life and soul of the picnic, never once lost sight from the beginning of the merrymaking to the end. He had detected

the state of affairs between Miss Milroy and Allan at a glance; and he at once provided for his client's inclinations in that quarter, by offering (in virtue of his local knowledge) to lead the way in the first carriage, and by asking Major Milroy and the curate if they would do him the honour of accompanying him. "We shall pass a very interesting place to a military man, sir," said young Pedgift, addressing the major, with his happy and unblushing confidence, "the remains of a Roman encampment. And my father, sir, who is a subscriber," proceeded this rising lawyer, turning to the curate, "wished me to ask your opinion of the new Infant School buildings at Little Gill Beck. Would you kindly give it me, as we go along?" He opened the carriage-door, and helped in the major and the curate, before they could either of them start any difficulties. The necessary result followed. Allan and Miss Milroy rode together in the same carriage, with the extra convenience of a deaf old lady in attendance to keep the squire's compliments within the necessary limits.

Never yet had Allan enjoyed such an interview with Miss Milroy as the interview he now obtained on the road to the Broads. The dear old lady, after a little anecdote or two on the subject of her son, did the one thing wanting to secure the perfect felicity of her two youthful companions—she became considerably blind for the occasion, as well as deaf. A quarter of an hour after the carriage left the major's cottage, the poor old soul, reposing on snug cushions, and fanned by a fine summer air, fell peaceably asleep. Allan made love, and Miss Milroy sanctioned the manufacture of that occasionally precious article of human commerce, sublimely indifferent on both sides to a solemn base accompaniment on two notes, played by the curate's mother's unsuspecting nose. The only interruption to the love-making (the snoring being a thing more grave and permanent in its nature, was not interrupted at all) came at intervals from the carriage ahead. Not satisfied with having the major's Roman encampment and the curate's Infant Schools on his mind, Pedgift Junior rose erect from time to time in his place, and, respectfully hailing the hindmost vehicle, directed Allan's attention, in a shrill tenor voice, and with an excellent choice of language, to objects of interest on the road. The only way to quiet him was to answer, which Allan invariably did by shouting back, "Yes, beautiful"—upon which young Pedgift disappeared again in the recesses of the leading carriage, and took up the Romans and the Infants where he had left them last.

The scene through which the picnic party was now passing, merited far more attention than it received either from Allan or Allan's friends.

An hour's steady driving from the major's cottage had taken young Armadale and his guests beyond the limits of Midwinter's solitary walk, and was now bringing them nearer and nearer to one of the strangest and loveliest aspects of Nature, which the inland landscape, not of Norfolk only, but of all England, can show. Little by little, the face of the country began to change as the carriage approached the remote and lonely district of the Broads. The wheat-fields and turnip-fields became per-

ceptibly fewer; and the fat green grazing-grounds on either side grew wider and wider in their smooth and sweeping range. Heaps of dry rushes and reeds, laid up for the basket-maker and the thatcher, began to appear at the roadside. The old gabled cottages of the early part of the drive dwindled and disappeared, and huts with mud walls rose in their place. With the ancient church towers and the wind and water mills, which had hitherto been the only lofty objects seen over the low marshy flat, there now rose all round the horizon, gliding slow and distant behind fringes of pollard willows, the sails of invisible boats moving on invisible waters. All the strange and startling anomalies presented by an inland agricultural district, isolated from other districts by its intricate surrounding network of pools and streams—holding its communications and carrying its produce by water instead of by land—began to present themselves in closer and closer succession. Nets appeared on cottage palings; little flat-bottomed boats lay strangely at rest among the flowers in cottage gardens; farmers' men passed to and fro clad in composite costume of the coast and the field, in sailors' hats and fishermen's boots, and ploughmen's smocks,—and even yet the low-lying labyrinth of waters, embosomed in its mystery of solitude, was a hidden labyrinth still. A minute more, and the carriages took a sudden turn from the hard high-road into a little weedy lane. The wheels ran noiseless on the damp and spongy ground. A lonely outlying cottage appeared, with its litter of nets and boats. A few yards farther on, and the last morsel of firm earth suddenly ended in a tiny creek and quay. One turn more to the end of the quay—and there, spreading its great sheet of water, far and bright and smooth, on the right hand and the left—there, as pure in its spotless blue, as still in its heavenly peacefulness as the summer sky above it, was the first of the Norfolk Broads.

The carriages stopped, the love-making broke off, and the venerable Mrs. Pentecost, recovering the use of her senses at a moment's notice, fixed her eyes sternly on Allan the instant she woke.

"I see in your face, Mr. Armadale," said the old lady, sharply, "that you think I have been asleep."

The consciousness of guilt acts differently on the two sexes. In nine cases out of ten, it is a much more manageable consciousness with a woman than with a man. All the confusion, on this occasion, was on the man's side. While Allan reddened and looked embarrassed, the quick-witted Miss Milroy instantly embraced the old lady with a burst of innocent laughter. "He is quite incapable, dear Mrs. Pentecost," said the little hypocrite, "of anything so ridiculous as thinking you have been asleep!"

"All I wish Mr. Armadale to know," pursued the old lady, still suspicious of Allan, "is, that my head being giddy, I am obliged to close my eyes in a carriage. Closing the eyes, Mr. Armadale, is one thing, and going to sleep is another. Where is my son?"

The Reverend Samuel appeared silently at the carriage-door with his

green spectacles and his sickly smile in perfect working order, and assisted his mother to get out. ("Did you enjoy the drive, Sammy?" asked the old lady. "Beautiful scenery, my dear, wasn't it?") Young Pedgift, on whom all the arrangements for exploring the Broads devolved, bustled about, giving his orders to the boatmen. Major Milroy, placid and patient, sat apart on an overturned punt, and privately looked at his watch. Was it past noon already? More than an hour past. For the first time, for many a long year, the famous clock at home had struck in an empty workshop. Time had lifted his wonderful scythe, and the corporal and his men had relieved guard, with no master's eye to watch their performances, with no master's hand to encourage them to do their best. The major sighed as he put his watch back in his pocket. "I'm afraid I'm too old for this sort of thing," thought the good man, looking about him dreamily. "I don't find I enjoy it as much as I thought I should. When are we going on the water, I wonder? where's Neelie?"

Neelie—more properly Miss Milroy—was behind one of the carriages with the promoter of the picnic. They were immersed in the interesting subject of their own Christian names, and Allan was as near a point-blank proposal of marriage, as it is well possible for a thoughtless young gentleman of two-and-twenty to be.

"Tell me the truth," said Miss Milroy, with her eyes modestly riveted on the ground, "when you first knew what my name was, you didn't like it, did you?"

"I like everything that belongs to you," rejoined Allan, vigorously "I think Eleanor is a beautiful name; and yet, I don't know why, I think the major made an improvement when he changed it to Neelie."

"I can tell you why, Mr. Armadale," said the major's daughter, with great gravity. "There are some unfortunate people in this world, whose names are—how can I express it?—whose names are, Misfits. Mine is a Misfit. I don't blame my parents, for of course it was impossible to know when I was a baby how I should grow up. But as things are, I and my name don't fit each other. When you hear a young lady called Eleanor, you think of a tall, beautiful, interesting creature directly—the very opposite of *me*! With my personal appearance Eleanor sounds ridiculous—and Neelie, as you yourself remarked, is just the thing. No! no! don't say any more—I'm tired of the subject; I've got another name in my head, if we must speak of names, which is much better worth talking about than mine."

She stole a glance at her companion which said plainly enough, "The name is yours." Allan advanced a step nearer to her, and lowered his voice (without the slightest necessity,) to a mysterious whisper. Miss Milroy instantly resumed her investigation of the ground. She looked at it with such extraordinary interest that a geologist might have suspected her of scientific flirtation with the superficial strata.

"What name are you thinking of?" asked Allan.

Miss Milroy addressed her answer, in the form of a remark, to the superficial strata—and let them do what they liked with it, in their capacity of conductors of sound, “If I had been a man,” she said, “I should so like to have been called Allan!”

She felt his eyes on her as she spoke, and, turning her head aside, became absorbed in the graining of the panel at the back of the carriage. “How beautiful it is!” she exclaimed with a sudden outburst of interest in the vast subject of varnish. “I wonder how they do it?”

Man persists, and woman yields. Allan declined to shift the ground from love-making to coach-making. Miss Milroy dropped the subject.

“Call me by my name, if you really like it,” he whispered persuasively. “Call me ‘Allan,’ for once—just to try.”

She hesitated with a heightened colour and a charming smile, and shook her head. “I couldn’t just yet,” she answered softly.

“May I call you Neelie? Is it too soon?”

She looked at him again, with a sudden disturbance about the bosom of her dress, and a sudden flash of tenderness in her dark grey eyes.

“You know best,” she said faintly, in a whisper.

The inevitable answer was on the tip of Allan’s tongue. At the very instant, however, when he opened his lips, the abhorrent high tenor of Pedgift Junior, shouting for “Mr. Armadale,” rang cheerfully through the quiet air. At the same moment, from the other side of the carriage, the lurid spectacles of the Reverend Samuel showed themselves officiously on the search; and the voice of the Reverend Samuel’s mother (who had, with great dexterity, put the two ideas of the presence of water and a sudden movement among the company together) inquired distractedly if anybody was drowned? Sentiment flies and Love shudders at all demonstrations of the noisy kind. Allan said, “Damn it,” and rejoined young Pedgift. Miss Milroy sighed, and took refuge with her father.

“I’ve done it, Mr. Armadale!” cried young Pedgift, greeting his patron gaily. “We can all go on the water together; I’ve got the biggest boat on the Broads. The little skiffs,” he added, in a lower tone, as he led the way to the quay steps, “besides being ticklish and easily upset, won’t hold more than two, with the boatman; and the major told me he should feel it his duty to go with his daughter, if we all separated in different boats. I thought *that* would hardly do, sir,” pursued Pedgift Junior, with a respectfully sly emphasis on the words. “And, besides, if we had put the old lady into a skiff, with her weight (sixteen stone if she’s a pound), we might have had her upside down in the water half her time, which would have occasioned delay, and thrown what you call a damp on the proceedings. Here’s the boat, Mr. Armadale. What do you think of it?”

The boat added one more to the strangely anomalous objects which appeared at the Broads. It was nothing less than as stout old lifeboat, passing its last declining years on the smooth fresh water, after the stormy days of its youth-time on the wild salt sea. A comfortable little cabin

for the use of fowlers in the winter season, had been built amidships, and a mast and sail adapted for inland navigation had been fitted forward. There was room enough and to spare for the guests, the dinner, and the three men in charge. Allan clapped his faithful lieutenant approvingly on the shoulder; and even Mrs. Pentecost, when the whole party were comfortably established on board, took a comparatively cheerful view of the prospects of the picnic. "If anything happens," said the old lady, addressing the company generally, "there's one comfort for all of us. My son can swim."

The boat floated out from the creek into the placid waters of the Broad; and the full beauty of the scene opened on the view.

On the northward and westward, as the boat reached the middle of the lake, the shore lay clear and low in the sunshine, fringed darkly at certain points by rows of dwarf trees; and dotted here and there, in the open spaces, with windmills and reed-thatched cottages of puddled mud. Southward, the great sheet of water narrowed gradually to a little group of close-nesting islands which closed the prospect; while to the east a long, gently undulating line of reeds followed the windings of the Broad, and shut out all view of the watery wastes beyond. So clear and so light was the summer-air, that the one cloud in the eastern quarter of the heaven was the smoke cloud left by a passing steamer three miles distant and more on the invisible sea. When the voices of the pleasure-party were still, not a sound rose far or near but the faint ripple at the bows, as the men, with slow deliberate strokes of their long poles, pressed the boat forward softly over the shallow water. The world and the world's turmoil seemed left behind for ever on the land; the silence was the silence of enchantment—the delicious interflow of the soft purity of the sky and the bright tranquillity of the lake.

Established in perfect comfort in the boat—the major and his daughter on one side, the curate and his mother on the other, and Allan and young Pedgift between the two—the water party floated smoothly towards the little nest of islands at the end of the Broad. Miss Milroy was in raptures; Allan was delighted; and the major for once forgot his clock. Every one felt pleasurably, in their different ways, the quiet and beauty of the scene. Mrs. Pentecost, in her way, felt it like a clairvoyante—with closed eyes.

"Look behind you, Mr. Armadale," whispered young Pedgift. "I think the parson's beginning to enjoy himself."

An un wonted briskness—portentous apparently of coming speech—did certainly at that moment enliven the curate's manner. He jerked his head from side to side like a bird; he cleared his throat, and clasped his hands, and looked with a gentle interest at the company. Getting into spirits seemed, in the case of this excellent person, to be alarmingly like getting into the pulpit.

"Even in this scene of tranquillity," said the Reverend Samuel, coming out softly with his first contribution to the society, in the shape of a

remark, "the Christian mind—led, so to speak, from one extreme to another—is forcibly recalled to the unstable nature of all earthly enjoyments. How, if this calm should not last? How, if the winds rose and the waters became agitated?"

"You needn't alarm yourself about that, sir," said young Pedgift; "June's the fine season here—and you can swim."

Mrs. Pentecost (mesmerically affected in all probability by the near neighbourhood of her son) opened her eyes suddenly, and asked with her customary eagerness, "What does my boy say?"

The Reverend Samuel repeated his words in the key that suited his mother's infirmity. The old lady nodded in high approval, and pursued her son's train of thought through the medium of a quotation.

"Ah!" sighed Mrs. Pentecost, with infinite relish, "He rides the whirlwind, Sammy, and directs the storm!"

"Noble words!" said the Reverend Samuel. "Noble and consoling words!"

"I say," whispered Allan, "if he goes on much longer in that way, what's to be done?"

"I told you, papa, it was a risk to ask them," added Miss Milroy, in another whisper.

"My dear!" remonstrated the major. "We knew nobody else in the neighbourhood; and as Mr. Armadale kindly suggested our bringing our friends, what could we do?"

"We can't upset the boat," remarked young Pedgift, with sardonic gravity. "It's a lifeboat, unfortunately. May I venture to suggest putting something into the reverend gentleman's mouth, Mr. Armadale? It's close on three o'clock. What do you say to ringing the dinner-bell, sir?"

Never was the right man more entirely in the right place than Pedgift Junior at the picnic. In ten minutes more the boat was brought to a standstill among the reeds; the Thorpe-Ambrose hampers were unpacked on the roof of the cabin; and the current of the curate's eloquence was checked for the day.

How inestimably important in its moral results—and therefore how praiseworthy in itself—is the act of eating and drinking! The social virtues centre in the stomach. A man who is not a better husband, father, and brother, after dinner than before, is, digestively speaking, an incurably vicious man. What hidden charms of character disclose themselves, what dormant amiabilities awaken when our common humanity gathers together to pour out the gastric juice! At the opening of the hampers from Thorpe-Ambrose, sweet Sociability (offspring of the happy union of Civilization and Mrs. Gripper) exhaled among the boating party, and melted in one friendly fusion the discordant elements of which that party had hitherto been composed. Now did the Reverend Samuel Pentecost, whose light had hitherto been hidden under a bushel, prove at last that he could do something, by proving that he could eat. Now did

Pedgift Junior shine brighter than ever he had shone yet, in gems of caustic humour and exquisite fertilities of resource. Now did the squire, and the squire's charming guest, prove the triple connection between Champagne that sparkles, Love that grows bolder, and Eyes whose vocabulary is without the word No. Now did cheerful old times come back to the major's memory, and cheerful old stories not told for years find their way to the major's lips. And now did Mrs. Pentecost, coming out wakefully in the whole force of her estimable maternal character, seize on a supplementary fork, and ply that useful instrument incessantly between the choicest morsels in the whole round of dishes, and the few vacant places left available on the Reverend Samuel's plate. "Don't laugh at my son," cried the old lady, observing the merriment which her proceedings produced among the company. "It's my fault, poor dear—I make him eat!" And there are men in this world who, seeing virtues such as these developed at the table, as they are developed nowhere else, can, nevertheless, rank the glorious privilege of dining with the smallest of the diurnal personal worries which necessity imposes on mankind—with buttoning your waistcoat, for example, or lacing your stays! Trust no such monster as this with your tender secrets, your loves and hatreds, your hopes and fears. His heart is uncorrected by his stomach, and the social virtues are not in him.

The last mellow hours of the day and the first cool breezes of the long summer evening had met, before the dishes were all laid waste, and the bottles as empty as bottles should be. This point in the proceedings attained, the picnic party looked lazily at Pedgift Junior to know what was to be done next. That inexhaustible functionary was equal as ever to all the calls on him. He had a new amusement ready before the quickest of the company could so much as ask him what that amusement was to be.

"Fond of music on the water, Miss Milroy?" he asked in his airiest and pleasantest manner.

Miss Milroy adored music, both on the water and the land—always excepting the one case when she was practising the art herself on the piano at home.

"We'll get out of the reeds first," said young Pedgift. He gave his orders to the boatmen—dived briskly into the little cabin—and reappeared with a concertina in his hand. "Neat, Miss Milroy, isn't it?" he observed, pointing to his initials, inlaid on the instrument in mother-of-pearl. "My name's Augustus, like my father's. Some of my friends knock off the 'A,' and call me 'Gustus Junior.' A small joke goes a long way among friends, doesn't it, Mr. Armadale? I sing a little, to my own accompaniment, ladies and gentlemen; and, if quite agreeable, I shall be proud and happy to do my best."

"Stop!" cried Mrs. Pentecost; "I doat on music."

With this formidable announcement, the old lady opened a prodigious leather-bag, from which she never parted night or day, and took out an

car-trumpet of the old-fashioned kind—something between a key bugle and a French horn. "I don't care to use the thing generally," explained Mrs. Pentecost, "because I'm afraid of it's making me deafen than ever. But I can't and won't miss the music. I doat on music. If you'll hold the other end, Sammy, I'll stick it in my ear. Neelie, my dear, tell him to begin."

Young Pedgift was troubled with no nervous hesitation: he began at once—not with songs of the light and modern kind, such as might have been expected from an amateur of his age and character—but with declamatory and patriotic bursts of poetry, set to the bold and blatant music which the people of England loved dearly at the earlier part of the present century, and which, whenever they can get it, they love dearly still. "The Death of Marmion," "The Battle of the Baltic," "The Bay of Biscay," "Nelson," under various vocal aspects, as exhibited by the late Braham—these were the songs in which the roaring concertina and strident tenor of Gustus Junior exulted together. "Tell me when you're tired, ladies and gentlemen," said the minstrel solicitor. "There's no conceit about me. Will you have a little sentiment by way of variety? Shall I wind up with "The Mistletoe Bough," and "Poor Mary Anne?"

Having favoured his audience with those two cheerful melodies, young Pedgift respectfully requested the rest of the company to follow his vocal example in turn; offering, in every case, to play "a running accompaniment" impromptu, if the singer would only be so obliging as to favour him with the key-note.

"Go on, somebody!" cried Mrs. Pentecost eagerly. "I tell you again, I doat on music. We haven't had half enough yet, have we, Sammy?"

The Reverend Samuel made no reply. The unhappy man had reasons of his own—not exactly in his bosom, but a little lower—for remaining silent, in the midst of the general hilarity and the general applause. Alas for humanity! Even maternal love is alloyed with mortal fallibility. Owing much already to his excellent mother, the Reverend Samuel was now additionally indebted to her for a smart indigestion.

Nobody, however, noticed as yet the signs and tokens of internal revolution in the curate's face. Everybody was occupied in entreating everybody else to sing. Miss Milroy appealed to the founder of the feast. "Do sing something, Mr. Armadale," she said; "I should so like to hear you!"

"If you once begin, sir," added the cheerful Pedgift, "you'll find it get uncommonly easy as you go on. Music is a science which requires to be taken by the throat at starting."

"With all my heart," said Allan, in his good-humoured way. "I know lots of tunes, but the worst of it is the words escape me. I wonder if I can remember one of Moore's Melodies? My poor mother used to be fond of teaching me Moore's Melodies when I was a boy."

"Whose melodies?" asked Mrs. Pentecost. "Moore's? Aha! I know Tom Moore by heart."

"Perhaps, in that case, you will be good enough to help me, ma'am, if my memory breaks down," rejoined Allan. "I'll take the easiest melody in the whole collection, if you'll allow me. Everybody knows it—'Eveleen's Bower.'"

"I'm familiar, in a general sort of way, with the national melodies of England, Scotland, and Ireland," said Pedgift Junior. "I'll accompany you, sir, with the greatest pleasure. This is the sort of thing, I think." He seated himself cross-legged on the roof of the cabin, and burst into a complicated musical improvisation, wonderful to hear—a mixture of instrumental flourishes and groans; a jig corrected by a dirge, and a dirge enlivened by a jig. "That's the sort of thing," said young Pedgift, with his smile of supreme confidence. "Fire away, sir!"

Mrs. Pentecost elevated her trumpet, and Allan elevated his voice. "Oh, weep for the hour when to Eveleen's Bower——" He stopped; the accompaniment stopped; the audience waited. "It's a most extraordinary thing," said Allan; "I thought I had the next line on the tip of my tongue, and it seems to have escaped me. I'll begin again, if you have no objection. 'Oh, weep for the hour when to Eveleen's Bower——'

"The lord of the valley with false vows came," said Mrs. Pentecost.

"Thank you, ma'am," said Allan. "Now I shall get on smoothly. 'Oh, weep for the hour when to Eveleen's Bower, the lord of the valley with false vows came. The moon was shining bright'——"

"No!" said Mrs. Pentecost.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," remonstrated Allan. "'The moon was shining bright'——"

"The moon wasn't doing anything of the kind," said Mrs. Pentecost.

Pedgift Junior, foreseeing a dispute, persevered *solto voce* with the accompaniment, in the interests of harmony.

"Moore's own words, ma'am," said Allan, "in my mother's copy of the Melodies."

"Your mother's copy was wrong," retorted Mrs. Pentecost. "Didn't I tell you just now that I knew Tom Moore by heart?"

Pedgift Junior's peace-making concertina still flourished and groaned, in the minor key.

"Well, what *did* the moon do?" asked Allan, in despair.

"What the moon *ought* to have done, sir, or Tom Moore wouldn't have written it so," rejoined Mrs. Pentecost. "'The moon hid her light from the heaven that night, and wept behind her clouds o'er the maiden's shame!' I wish that young man would leave off playing," added Mrs. Pentecost, venting her rising irritation on Gustus Junior. "I've had enough of him—he tickles my ears."

"Proud, I'm sure, ma'am," said the unblushing Pedgift. "The whole science of music consists in tickling the ears."

"We seem to be drifting into a sort of argument," remarked Major

Milroy, placidly. "Wouldn't it be better if Mr. Armadale went on with his song?"

"Do go on, Mr. Armadale!" added the major's daughter. "Do go on, Mr. Pedgift!"

"One of them doesn't know the words, and the other doesn't know the music," said Mrs. Pentecost. "Let them go on, if they can!"

"Sorry to disappoint you, ma'am," said Pedgift Junior; "I'm ready to go on, myself, to any extent. Now, Mr. Armadale!"

Allan opened his lips to take up the unfinished melody where he had last left it. Before he could utter a note, the curate suddenly rose, with a ghastly face, and a hand pressed convulsively over the middle region of his waistcoat.

"What's the matter?" cried the whole boating party in chorus.

"I am exceedingly unwell," said the Reverend Samuel Pentecost.

The boat was instantly in a state of confusion. "Eveleen's Bower" expired on Allan's lips, and even the irrepressible concertina of Pedgift was silenced at last. The alarm proved to be quite needless. Mrs. Pentecost's son possessed a mother, and that mother had a bag. In two seconds, the art of medicine occupied the place left vacant in the attention of the company by the art of music.

"Rub it gently, Sammy," said Mrs. Pentecost. "I'll get out the bottles and give you a dose. It's his poor stomach, major. Hold my trumpet, somebody—and stop the boat. You take that bottle, Neelie, my dear; and you take this one, Mr. Armadale; and give them to me as I want them. Ah, poor dear, I know what's the matter with him! Want of power *here*, major—cold, acid, and flabby. Ginger to warm him; soda to correct him; salvolatile to hold him up. There, Sammy! drink it before it settles—and then go and lie down, my dear, in that dog-kennel of a place they call the cabin. No more music!" added Mrs. Pentecost, shaking her forefinger at the proprietor of the concertina—"unless it's a hymn, and that I don't object to."

Nobody appearing to be in a fit frame of mind for singing a hymn, the all-accomplished Pedgift drew upon his stores of local knowledge, and produced a new idea. The course of the boat was immediately changed under his direction. In a few minutes more, the company found themselves in a little island-creek, with a lonely cottage at the far end of it, and a perfect forest of reeds closing the view all round them.

"What do you say, ladies and gentlemen, to stepping on shore and seeing what a reed-cutter's cottage looks like?" suggested young Pedgift.

"We say, yes, to be sure," answered Allan. "I think our spirits have been a little dashed by Mr. Pentecost's illness and Mrs. Pentecost's bag," he added, in a whisper to Miss Milroy. "A change of this sort is the very thing we want to set us all going again."

He and young Pedgift handed Miss Milroy out of the boat. The major followed. Mrs. Pentecost sat immovable as the Egyptian Sphinx, with her bag on her knees, mounting guard over "Sammy" in the cabin.

"We must keep the fun going, sir," said Allan, as he helped the major over the side of the boat. "We haven't half done yet with the enjoyment of the day."

His voice seconded his hearty belief in his own prediction to such good purpose, that even Mrs. Pentecost heard him, and ominously shook her head.

"Ah!" sighed the curate's mother. "If you were as old as I am, young gentleman, you wouldn't feel quite so sure of the enjoyment of the day!"

So, in rebuke of the rashness of youth, spoke the caution of age. The negative view is notoriously the safe view, all the world over—and the Pentecost philosophy is, as a necessary consequence, generally in the right.

CHAPTER IX.

FATE OR CHANCE?

It was close on six o'clock when Allan and his friends left the boat; and the evening influence was creeping already, in its mystery and its stillness, over the watery solitude of the Broads.

The shore in these wild regions was not like the shore elsewhere. Firm as it looked, the garden-ground in front of the reed-cutter's cottage was floating ground, that rose and fell and oozed into puddles under the pressure of the foot. The boatmen who guided the visitors warned them to keep the path, and pointed through gaps in the reeds and pollards to grassy places, on which strangers would have walked confidently, where the crust of earth was not strong enough to bear the weight of a child over the unfathomed depths of slime and water beneath. The solitary cottage, built of planks pitched black, stood on ground that had been steadied and strengthened by resting it on piles. A little wooden tower rose at one end of the roof, and served as a look-out post in the fowling season. From this elevation the eye ranged far and wide over a wilderness of winding water and lonesome marsh. If the reed-cutter had lost his boat, he would have been as completely isolated from all communication with town or village, as if his place of abode had been a light-vessel instead of a cottage. Neither he nor his family complained of their solitude, or looked in any way the rougher or the worse for it. His wife received the visitors hospitably, in a snug little room, with a raftered ceiling, and windows which looked like windows in a cabin on board ship. His wife's father told stories of the famous days when the smugglers came up from the sea at night, rowing through the network of rivers with muffled oars till they gained the lonely Broads, and sunk their spirit casks in the water, far from the coastguard's reach. His wild little children played at hide-and-seek with the visitors; and the visitors ranged in and out of the cottage, and round and round the morsel of

firm earth on which it stood, surprised and delighted by the novelty of all they saw. The one person who noticed the advance of the evening—the one person who thought of the flying time and the stationary Pentecosts in the boat—was young Pedgitt. That experienced pilot of the Broads looked askance at his watch, and drew Allan aside at the first opportunity.

"I don't wish to hurry you, Mr. Armadale," said Pedgitt Junior; "but the time is getting on, and there's a lady in the case."

"A lady?" repeated Allan.

"Yes, sir," rejoined young Pedgitt. "A lady from London; connected (if you'll allow me to jog your memory) with a pony-chaise and white harness."

"Good heavens, the governess!" cried Allan; "why, we have forgotten all about her!"

"Don't be alarmed, sir; there's plenty of time, if we only get into the boat again. This is how it stands, Mr. Armadale. We settled, if you remember, to have the gipsy tea-making at the next 'Broad' to this—Hurle Mere?"

"Certainly," said Allan. "Hurle Mere is the place where my friend Midwinter has promised to come and meet us."

"Hurle Mere is where the governess will be, sir, if your coachman follows my directions," pursued young Pedgitt. "We have got nearly an hour's punting to do, along the twists and turns of the narrow waters (which they call The Sounds here) between this and Hurle Mere; and according to my calculations we must get on board again in five minutes, if we are to be in time to meet the governess and to meet your friend."

"We mustn't miss my friend, on any account," said Allan; "or the governess either, of course. I'll tell the major."

Major Milroy was at that moment preparing to mount the wooden watch-tower of the cottage to see the view. The ever useful Pedgitt volunteered to go up with him, and rattle off all the necessary local explanations in half the time which the reed-cutter would occupy in describing his own neighbourhood to a stranger.

Allan remained standing in front of the cottage, more quiet and more thoughtful than usual. His interview with young Pedgitt had brought his absent friend to his memory for the first time since the picnic party had started. He was surprised that Midwinter, so much in his thoughts on all other occasions, should have been so long out of his thoughts now. Something troubled him, like a sense of self-reproach, as his mind reverted to the faithful friend at home, toiling hard over the steward's books, in his interests and for his sake. "Dear old fellow," thought Allan, "I shall be so glad to see him at the Mere; the day's pleasure won't be complete till he joins us!"

"Should I be right or wrong, Mr. Armadale, if I guessed that you were thinking of somebody?" asked a voice softly behind him.

Allan turned, and found the major's daughter at his side. Miss Milroy

(not unmindful of a certain tender interview which had taken place behind a carriage) had noticed her admirer standing thoughtfully by himself, and had determined on giving him another opportunity, while her father and young Pedgift were at the top of the watch-tower.

"You know everything," said Allan smiling. "*I was thinking of somebody.*"

Miss Milroy stole a glance at him—a glance of gentle encouragement. There could be but one human creature in Mr. Armadale's mind after what had passed between them that morning! It would be only an act of mercy to take him back again at once to the interrupted conversation of a few hours since on the subject of names.

"I have been thinking of somebody too," she said, half inviting, half repelling the coming avowal. "If I tell you the first letter of my Somebody's name, will you tell me the first letter of yours?"

"I will tell you anything you like," rejoined Allan with the utmost enthusiasm.

She still shrank coquettishly from the very subject that she wanted to approach. "Tell me your letter first," she said in low tones, looking away from him.

Allan laughed. "M," he said, "is my first letter."

She started a little. Strange that he should be thinking of her by her surname instead of her Christian name—but it mattered little as long as he *was* thinking of her.

"What is your letter?" asked Allan.

She blushed and smiled. "A—if you will have it!" she answered in a reluctant little whisper. She stole another look at him, and luxuriously protracted her enjoyment of the coming avowal once more. "How many syllables is the name in?" she asked, drawing patterns shyly on the ground with the end of her parasol.

No man with the slightest knowledge of the sex would have been rash enough, in Allan's position, to tell her the truth. Allan, who knew nothing whatever of women's natures, and who told the truth right and left in all mortal emergencies, answered as if he had been under examination in a court of justice.

"It's a name in three syllables," he said.

Miss Milroy's downcast eyes flashed up at him like lightning. "Three!" she repeated in the blankest astonishment.

Allan was too inveterately straightforward to take the warning even now. "I'm not strong at my spelling, I know," he said, with his light-hearted laugh. "But I don't think I'm wrong in calling Midwinter a name in three syllables. I was thinking of my friend—but never mind my thoughts. Tell me who A is—tell me who *you* were thinking of?"

"Of the first letter of the alphabet, Mr. Armadale, and I beg positively to inform you of nothing more!"

With that annihilating answer the major's daughter put up her parasol and walked back by herself to the boat.

Allan stood petrified with amazement. If Miss Milroy had actually boxed his ears (and there is no denying that she had privately longed to devote her hand to that purpose) he could hardly have felt more bewildered than he felt now. "What on earth have I done?" he asked himself helplessly, as the major and young Pedgift joined him, and the three walked down together to the waterside. "I wonder what she'll say to me next?"

She said absolutely nothing—she never so much as looked at Allan when he took his place in the boat. There she sat, with her eyes and her complexion both much brighter than usual, taking the deepest interest in the curate's progress towards recovery; in the state of Mrs. Pentecost's spirits; in Pedgift Junior (for whom she ostentatiously made room enough to let him sit beside her); in the scenery and the reed-cutter's cottage; in everybody and everything but Allan—whom she would have married with the greatest pleasure five minutes since. "I'll never forgive him," thought the major's daughter. "To be thinking of that ill-bred wretch when I was thinking of *him*—and to make me all but confess it before I found him out! Thank heaven Mr. Pedgift is in the boat!"

In this frame of mind Miss Neelie applied herself forthwith to the fascination of Pedgift and the discomfiture of Allan. "Oh, Mr. Pedgift, how extremely clever and kind of you to think of showing us that sweet cottage! Lonely, Mr. Armadale? I don't think it's lonely at all; I should like of all things to live there. What would this picnic have been without you, Mr. Pedgift; you can't think how I have enjoyed it since we got into the boat. Cool, Mr. Armadale? What can you possibly mean by saying it's cool; it's the warmest evening we've had this summer. And the music, Mr. Pedgift; how nice it was of you to bring your concertina! I wonder if I could accompany you on the piano? I should so like to try. Oh, yes, Mr. Armadale, no doubt you meant to do something musical too, and I daresay you sing very well when you know the words; but, to tell you the truth, I always did, and always shall hate Moore's Melodies!"

Thus, with merciless dexterity of manipulation, did Miss Milroy work that sharpest female weapon of offence, the tongue—and thus she would have used it for some time longer, if Allan had only shown the necessary jealousy, or if Pedgift had only afforded the necessary encouragement. But adverse fortune had decreed that she should select for her victims two men essentially unassailable under existing circumstances. Allan was too innocent of all knowledge of female subtleties and susceptibilities to understand anything, except that the charming Neelie was unreasonably out of temper with him without the slightest cause. The wary Pedgift, as became one of the quick-witted youth of the present generation, submitted to female influence, with his eye fixed immovably all the time on his own interests. Many a young man of the past generation, who was no fool, has sacrificed everything for love. Not one young man in ten thousand of the present generation, *except the fools*, has sacri-

ficed a halfpenny. The daughters of Eve still inherit their mother's merits, and commit their mother's faults. But the sons of Adam, in these latter days, are men who would have handed the famous apple back with a bow, and a "Thanks, no; it might get me into a scrape." When Allan—surprised and disappointed—moved away out of Miss Milroy's reach to the forward part of the boat, Pedgift Junior rose and followed him. "You're a very nice girl," thought this shrewd and sensible young man; "but a client's a client—and I am sorry to inform you, Miss, it won't do." He set himself at once to rouse Allan's spirits by diverting his attention to a new subject. There was to be a regatta that autumn on one of the Broads, and his client's opinion as a yachtsman might be valuable to the committee. "Something new I should think to you, sir, in a sailing-match on fresh water?" he said in his most ingratiatory manner. And Allan, instantly interested, answered, "Quite new. Do tell me about it!"

As for the rest of the party, at the other end of the boat, they were in a fair way to confirm Mrs. Pentecost's doubts whether the hilarity of the picnic would last the day out. Poor Neelie's natural feeling of irritation under the disappointment which Allan's awkwardness had inflicted on her, was now exasperated into silent and settled resentment by her own keen sense of humiliation and defeat. The major had relapsed into his habitually dreamy, absent manner; his mind was turning monotonously with the wheels of his clock. The curate still secluded his indigestion from public view in the innermost recesses of the cabin; and the curate's mother, with a second dose ready at a moment's notice, sat on guard at the door. Women of Mrs. Pentecost's age and character generally enjoy their own bad spirits. "This," sighed the old lady, wagging her head with a smile of sour satisfaction, "is what you call a day's pleasure, is it? Ah, what fools we all were to leave our comfortable homes!"

Meanwhile, the boat floated smoothly along the windings of the watery labyrinth which lay between the two Broads. The view on either side was now limited to nothing but interminable rows of reeds. Not a sound was heard, far or near; not so much as a glimpse of cultivated or inhabited land appeared anywhere. "A trifle dreary hereabouts, Mr. Armadale," said the ever-cheerful Pedgift. "But we are just out of it now. Look ahead, sir! Here we are at Hurle Mere."

The reeds opened back on the right hand and the left, and the boat glided suddenly into the wide circle of a pool. Round the nearer half of the circle, the eternal reeds still fringed the margin of the water. Round the farther half, the land appeared again—here, rolling back from the pool in desolate sand-hills; there, rising above it in a sweep of grassy shore. At one point, the ground was occupied by a plantation; and, at another, by the outbuildings of a lonely old red-brick house, with a strip of by-road near, that skirted the garden-wall, and ended at the pool. The sun was sinking in the clear heaven, and the water, where the sun's reflection failed to tinge it, was beginning to look black and cold. The solitude that had

been soothing, the silence that had felt like an enchantment on the other Broad, in the day's vigorous prime, was a solitude that saddened here—a silence that struck cold, in the stillness and melancholy of the day's decline.

The course of the boat was directed across the Mere to a creek in the grassy shore. One or two of the little flat-bottomed punts peculiar to the Broad's lay in the creek; and the reed-cutters to whom the punts belonged, surprised at the appearance of strangers, came out, staring silently, from behind an angle of the old garden-wall. Not another sign of life was visible anywhere. No pony-chaise had been seen by the reed-cutters; no stranger, either man or woman, had approached the shores of Hurle Mere that day.

Young Pedgift took another look at his watch, and addressed himself to Miss Milroy. "You may, or may not, see the governess when you get back to Thorpe-Ambrose," he said; "but, as the time stands now, you won't see her here. You know best, Mr. Armadale," he added, turning to Allan, "whether your friend is to be depended on to keep his appointment?"

"I am certain he is to be depended on," replied Allan, looking about him in unconcealed disappointment at Midwinter's absence.

"Very good," pursued Pedgift Junior. "If we light the fire for our gipsy tea-making on the open ground there, your friend may find us out, sir, by the smoke. That's the Indian dodge for picking up a lost man on the prairie, Miss Milroy—and it's pretty nearly wild enough (isn't it?) to be a prairie here!"

There are some temptations—principally those of the smaller kind—which it is not in the defensive capacity of female human nature to resist. The temptation to direct the whole force of her influence, as the one young lady of the party, towards the instant overthrow of Allan's arrangement for meeting his friend, was too much for the major's daughter. She turned on the smiling Pedgift with a look which ought to have overwhelmed him. But who ever overwhelmed a solicitor?

"I think it's the most lonely, dreary, hideous place I ever saw in my life!" said Miss Neelie. "If you insist on making tea here, Mr. Pedgift, don't make any for me. No! I shall stop in the boat; and though I am absolutely dying with thirst, I shall touch nothing till we get back again to the other Broad!"

The major opened his lips to remonstrate. To his daughter's infinite delight, Mrs. Pentecost rose from her seat, before he could say a word, and, after surveying the whole landward prospect, and seeing nothing in the shape of a vehicle anywhere, asked indignantly whether they were going all the way back again to the place where they had left the carriages in the middle of the day. On ascertaining that this was, in fact, the arrangement proposed; and that, from the nature of the country, the carriages could not have been ordered round to Hurle Mere without, in the first instance, sending them the whole of the way back to Thorpe-

Ambrose, Mrs. Pentecost (speaking in her son's interests) instantly declared that no earthly power should induce her to be out on the water after dark. "Call me a boat!" cried the old lady, in great agitation. "Wherever there's water, there's a night mist, and wherever there's a night mist, my son Samuel catches cold. Don't talk to me about your moonlight and your tea-making—you're all mad! Hi! you two men there!" cried Mrs. Pentecost, hailing the silent reed-cutters on shore. "Sixpence a-piece for you, if you'll take me and my son back in your boat!"

Before young Pedgift could interfere, Allan himself settled the difficulty this time, with perfect patience and good temper.

"I can't think, Mrs. Pentecost, of your going back in any boat but the boat you have come out in," he said. "There is not the least need (as you and Miss Milroy don't like the place) for anybody to go on shore here, but me. I *must* go on shore. My friend Midwinter never broke his promise to me yet; and I can't consent to leave Hurl Mere, as long as there is a chance of his keeping his appointment. But there's not the least reason in the world why I should stand in the way on that account. You have the major and Mr. Pedgift to take care of you; and you can get back to the carriages before dark, if you go at once. I will wait here, and give my friend half-an-hour more—and then I can follow you in one of the reed-cutters' boats."

"That's the most sensible thing, Mr. Armadale, you've said to-day," remarked Mrs. Pentecost, seating herself again in a violent hurry. "Tell them to be quick!" cried the old lady, shaking her fist at the boatmen. "Tell them to be quick!"

Allan gave the necessary directions, and stepped on shore. The wary Pedgift (sticking fast to his client,) tried to follow.

"We can't leave you here alone, sir," he said, protesting eagerly in a whisper. "Let the major take care of the ladies, and let me keep you company at the Mere."

"No, no!" said Allan, pressing him back. "They're all in low spirits on board. If you want to be of service to me, stop like a good fellow where you are, and do your best to keep the thing going."

He waved his hand, and the men pushed the boat off from the shore. The others all waved their hands in return except the major's daughter, who sat apart from the rest, with her face hidden under her parasol. The tears stood thick in Neelie's eyes. Her last angry feeling against Allan died out, and her heart went back to him penitently, the moment he left the boat. "How good he is to us all!" she thought, "and what a wretch I am!" She got up with every generous impulse in her nature urging her to make atonement to him. She got up, reckless of appearances, and looked after him with eager eyes and flushed cheeks, as he stood alone on the shore. "Don't be long, Mr. Armadale!" she said, with a desperate disregard of what the rest of the company thought of her.

The boat was already far out in the water, and with all Neelie's resolution, the words were spoken in a faint little voice, which failed to reach Allan's ears. The one sound he heard, as the boat gained the opposite extremity of the Mere, and disappeared slowly among the reeds, was the sound of the concertina. The indefatigable Pedgift was keeping things going—evidently under the auspices of Mrs. Pentecost—by performing a sacred melody.

Left by himself, Allan lit a cigar, and took a turn backwards and forwards on the shore. "She might have said a word to me at parting!" he thought. "I've done everything for the best; I've as good as told her how fond of her I am, and this is the way she treats me!" He stopped, and stood looking absently at the sinking sun, and the fast-darkening waters of the Mere. Some inscrutable influence in the scene forced its way stealthily into his mind, and diverted his thoughts from Miss Milroy to his absent friend. He started, and looked about him.

The reed-cutters had gone back to their retreat behind the angle of the wall, not a living creature was visible, not a sound rose anywhere along the dreary shore. Even Allan's spirits began to get depressed. It was nearly an hour after the time when Midwinter had promised to be at Hurle Mere. He had himself arranged to walk to the pool (with a stable-boy from Thorpe-Ambrose, as his guide), by lanes and footpaths which shortened the distance by the road. The boy knew the country well, and Midwinter was habitually punctual at all his appointments. Had anything gone wrong at Thorpe-Ambrose? Had some accident happened on the way? Determined to remain no longer doubting and idling by himself, Allan made up his mind to walk inland from the Mere, on the chance of meeting his friend. He went round at once to the angle in the wall, and asked one of the reed-cutters to show him the footpath to Thorpe-Ambrose.

The man led him away from the road, and pointed to a barely-perceptible break in the outer trees of the plantation. After pausing for one more useless look round him, Allan turned his back on the Mere, and made for the trees.

For a few paces, the path ran straight through the plantation. Thence, it took a sudden turn—and the water and the open country became both lost to view. Allan steadily followed the grassy track before him, seeing nothing and hearing nothing, until he came to another winding of the path. Turning in the new direction, he saw dimly a human figure sitting alone at the foot of one of the trees. Two steps nearer were enough to make the figure familiar to him. "Midwinter!" he exclaimed, in astonishment. "This is not the place where I was to meet you! What are you waiting for here?"

Midwinter rose, without answering. The evening dimness among the trees, which obscured his face, made his silence doubly perplexing.

Allan went on eagerly questioning him. "Did you come here by yourself?" he asked. "I thought the boy was to guide you?"

This time Midwinter answered. "When we got as far as these trees," he said, "I sent the boy back. He told me I was close to the place, and couldn't miss it."

"What made you stop here, when he left you?" reiterated Allan. "Why didn't you walk on?"

"Don't despise me," answered the other, "I hadn't the courage!"

"Not the courage?" repeated Allan. He paused a moment. "Oh, I know!" he resumed, putting his hand gaily on Midwinter's shoulder. "You're still shy of the Milroys. What nonsense, when I told you myself that your peace was made at the cottage!"

"I wasn't thinking, Allan, of your friends at the cottage. The truth is, I'm hardly myself to-day. I am ill and unnerved; trifles startle me." He stopped, and shrunk away, under the anxious scrutiny of Allan's eyes. "If you *will* have it," he burst out abruptly, "the horror of that night on board the Wreck has got me again; there's a dreadful oppression on my head; there's a dreadful sinking at my heart—I am afraid of something happening to us, if we don't part before the day is out. I can't break my promise to you; for God's sake, release me from it, and let me go back?"

Remonstrance, to any one who knew Midwinter, was plainly useless at that moment. Allan humoured him. "Come out of this dark airless place," he said; "and we'll talk about it. The water and the open sky are within a stone's throw of us. I hate a wood in the evening—it even gives me the horrors. You have been working too hard over the steward's books. Come and breathe freely in the blessed open air."

Midwinter stopped, considered for a moment, and suddenly submitted.

"You're right," he said, "and I'm wrong, as usual. I'm wasting time and distressing you to no purpose. What folly to ask you to let me go back! Suppose you had said yes?"

"Well?" asked Allan.

"Well," repeated Midwinter, "something would have happened at the first step to stop me—that's all. Come on."

They walked together in silence on the way to the Mere.

At the last turn in the path Allan's cigar went out. While he stopped to light it again, Midwinter walked on before him, and was the first to come in sight of the open ground.

Allan had just kindled the match, when, to his surprise, his friend came back to him round the turn in the path. There was light enough to show objects more clearly in this part of the plantation. The match, as Midwinter faced him, dropped on the instant from Allan's hand.

"Good God!" he cried, starting back, "you look as you looked on board the Wreck!"

Midwinter held up his hand for silence. He spoke with his wild eyes riveted on Allan's face, with his white lips close at Allan's ear.

"You remember how I *looked*," he answered, in a whisper. "Do

you remember what I *said*, when you and the doctor were talking of the Dream?"

"I have forgotten the Dream," said Allan.

As he made that answer, Midwinter took his hand, and led him round the last turn in the path.

"Do you remember it now?" he asked, and pointed to the Mere.

The sun was sinking in the cloudless westward heaven. The waters of the Mere lay beneath, tinged red by the dying light. The open country stretched away, darkening drearily already on the right hand and the left. And on the near margin of the pool, where all had been solitude before, there now stood, fronting the sunset, the figure of a Woman.

The two Armadales stood together in silence, and looked at the lonely figure and the dreary view.

Midwinter was the first to speak.

"Your own eyes have seen it," he said. "Now look at your own words."

He opened the narrative of the Dream, and held it under Allan's eyes. His finger pointed to the lines which recorded the first Vision; his voice sinking lower and lower, repeated the words:—

"The sense came to me of being left alone in the darkness.

"I waited.

"The darkness opened and showed me the vision—as in a picture—of a broad, lonely pool, surrounded by open ground. Above the farther margin of the pool I saw the cloudless western sky, red with the light of sunset.

"On the near margin of the pool there stood the Shadow of a Woman."

He ceased, and let the hand which held the manuscript drop to his side. The other hand pointed to the lonely figure, standing with its back turned on them, fronting the setting sun.

"There," he said, "stands the living Woman, in the Shadow's place! There speaks the first of the dream-warnings to you and to me! Let the future time find us still together—and the second figure that stands in the Shadow's place will be Mine."

Even Allan was silenced by the terrible certainty of conviction with which he spoke.

In the pause that followed, the figure at the pool moved, and walked slowly away round the margin of the shore. Allan stepped out beyond the last of the trees, and gained a wider view of the open ground. The first object that met his eyes was the pony-chaise from Thorpe-Ambrose.

He turned back to Midwinter with a laugh of relief. "What nonsense have you been talking!" he said. "And what nonsense have I been listening to! It's the governess at last."

Midwinter made no reply. Allan took him by the arm, and tried to lead him on. He released himself suddenly, and seized Allan with both hands—holding him back from the figure at the pool, as he had held

him back from the cabin-door on the deck of the timber-ship. Once again, the effort was in vain. Once again, Allan broke away as easily as he had broken away in the past time.

"One of us must speak to her," he said. "And if you won't, I will."

He had only advanced a few steps towards the Mere, when he heard, or thought he heard, a voice faintly calling after him, once and once only, the word Farewell. He stopped, with a feeling of uneasy surprise, and looked round.

"Was that you, Midwinter?" he asked.

There was no answer. After hesitating a moment more, Allan returned to the plantation. Midwinter was gone.

He looked back at the pool; doubtful in the new emergency, what to do next. The lonely figure had altered its course in the interval: it had turned and was advancing towards the trees. Allan had been evidently either heard or seen. It was impossible to leave a woman unbefriended in that helpless position and in that solitary place. For the second time Allan went out from the trees to meet her.

As he came within sight of her face, he stopped in ungovernable astonishment. The sudden revelation of her beauty, as she smiled and looked at him inquiringly, suspended the movement in his limbs and the words on his lips. A vague doubt beset him whether it was the governess, after all.

He roused himself; and, advancing a few paces, mentioned his name. "May I ask," he added, "if I have the pleasure——?"

The lady met him easily and gracefully half way.

"Major Milroy's governess," she said. "Miss Gwilt."

Confession.

THERE are three uses of the word *confession* familiar to us in daily life, and which have penetrated the history and literature of all times. They may be distinguished by the terms biographical, theological, and juridical. In a select number of instances, where the history of his life seems to have been extorted from the writer of it in defiance either of his own apparent interests, his natural reticence, or of the inherent privacy and solemnity attaching to the matter disclosed, the resulting story has been named by the writer, or his readers, a *confession*. Some such account may be given of the personal memoirs of Augustine, Rousseau, De Quincey, Coleridge, and, not least even among such names as these, Francis Newman. Again, there is the theological type of *confession*, such as is recognized in the Church of England, and forms so prominent a feature in the discipline of the Church of Rome. In this sense, the word is associated with many a bitter feeling of suspicion and animosity, though to some it may be redolent with holy memories of a relieved conscience, decided doubts, and forgiven sin. Lastly, there is a third use of the term *confession*, which alone of the three will form the subject of the present article. It is well known that in that saddest department of our political activity which relates to the investigation of crime, the confession of the criminal, judicial or extrajudicial, intentional or unintentional, is a source of information on which we are constantly called upon to rely. And even in those cases turning on the proper evaluation of circumstantial evidence, and where the proof of guilt is considered such as to be abundantly satisfactory to prudent men reasoning as they would "upon their own most important affairs," yet the subsequent confession of the prisoner is universally held to be a matter of some moment, and capable of affording much relief to the public mind. The significance of confession in this last juridical sense may be enforced by reference to very recent cases in the criminal records of the country. The case of Franz Müller threatened to become a matter of international solicitude. He is said to have become the hero of a popular drama in Austria, presenting an outrageous parody on the judicial system of England. Never, perhaps, in the whole history of the case, from the first announcement of the violent death of Mr. Briggs in the train to the last moment of the criminal's life, did the whole tragic features of the narrative culminate higher than when the German *confessor* put the question to the prisoner just hovering between life and death, "As within a few moments you shall stand in the presence of your God, did you do the deed?" The answer was, "I did it." There were that day few reasoners on the value of evidence stern enough not to experience a sense of additional security at receiving news of the confession.

Again, in the more recent case of Pelizzoni, where the system of English judicature certainly was not exhibited to the best advantage in the eyes of the many foreigners who naturally watched it, all the mystery and entanglement that grew about it as it proceeded was due to the voluntary confession of Gregorio Moggi. There were three trials before as many juries. At the first, a man, Pelizzoni, is convicted of murdering another man, Harrington, by evidence carrying complete satisfaction to the minds of judge and jury. At a second trial, a man, Gregorio Moggi, is produced and indicted, not for murdering, but for "killing and slaying feloniously" the same man, Harrington, and Pelizzoni is brought forward as a witness, the principal evidence in this case being the *confession* of Gregorio, which went to exculpate Pelizzoni entirely. Gregorio is convicted, and Pelizzoni thereby implicitly absolved. Pelizzoni is then tried for the manslaughter of another man at the same time and place, and acquitted.

We may also notice the case of the man Wright who was executed shortly after Townley's reprieve. It will be remembered that Wright pleaded guilty: the circumstances of the case were not strictly investigated, at least with that rigorous pertinacity which belongs to a public defence, and he was executed amid no small dissatisfaction. This case will serve to illustrate some remarks we shall have to make later on the proper treatment of voluntary statements.

Lastly, there is a most afflicting case still *sub judice*, and about which it does not become us as yet directly to speak. The circumstances, however, are notorious; and there never was a case waiting trial as to which a graver duty was imposed on all men and all women, of understanding whereof they affirm. It is a case which, for many reasons, touches us nearer than the feats of the common assassin.

Of all the incidents that belong to this distressing case, of course the most prominent one is the legal operation of a voluntary judicial confession. It may tend in some way to temper our thoughts and control our tongues if we briefly examine (1) the actual effect of such a confession by English law, with all its limitations and restrictions; and (2) the rational groundwork of such effect, so far as it is justified by reason and the laws of the human mind.

It may first be observed that whereas the plea of "Not guilty" only goes to assert that the evidence is not sufficient to convict, and, though popularly, is not legally held to be an absolute denial of the offence, yet the plea of "Guilty" is treated as an unlimited confession. There is in this case no trial, no defence, and sentence and execution follow as of course; in default, at least, of pardon from the Crown. It is to the credit of English law that it does not lean to or encourage confessions. Where any inducement whatever has been held out by a constable, magistrate, parent, master, or mistress, to make a confession, such as by saying, "It will be better for you to speak the truth," "It is no use for you to deny it, for there are the man and boy who saw you do it," or, "I only want my money, and if you give me that, you may go to the devil" (*Taylor's*

Ev.), evidence of the confession is wholly excluded. It is, however, important to observe that the inducement held out in order to exclude the evidence must have reference to escape from the criminal charge. It is, therefore, laid down in the books that if a clergyman, by spiritual exhortations, induces a person to confess his guilt, evidence of such confession is admitted. It must, however, be remembered that if at the trial the prisoner pleads "Not guilty," it will be open for him or his counsel to comment on the nature of the inducement held out, even to the extent of showing that it was such as to extort a series of untruths. This species of evidence has been held by some judges as the highest and most satisfactory evidence of guilt, as "it is presumed to flow from the highest sense of guilt;" and Chief Baron Gilbert observed that "the voluntary confession of the party in interest is reckoned the best evidence; for if a man swearing for his interest can give no credit, he must certainly give most credit when he swears against it."

Such is a brief account of the view the law of England takes of a judicial confession. It cautiously scrutinizes the terms of such confession and the manner in which it was obtained, and when the confession has resisted this test and stands forth relieved from all suspicion, then the law attaches to it the highest possible value. There is good ground for the rule of exclusion by reason of inducement over and above the uncertainty it imparts to the truth of the confession itself. If the least encouragement were given to the subordinate officers of police to extract evidence from accused persons, or rather if these officers were not strongly discouraged by the practical and legal abortiveness of all such efforts, they would, while seeking to obtain a character for activity and zeal, be unceasingly led to harass and oppress unfortunate prisoners in the hope of wringing from them a reluctant confession. It is on this system of extorting reluctant confessions that the whole Continental system of police is founded. We read with horror of cases where persons have confessed to serious crimes with a view to escape the examinations, hardship, cruel tauntings, and lengthened imprisonment which their obstinate professions of innocence involved. It was on this notion that the whole system of torture was constructed. It has been noted by Bentham how successful was this method in obtaining confessions of crimes we now regard as impossible,—such as witchcraft. "Turn which way we will,—to France, to England, to North America,—we shall find wretched women not only convicted, but confessing themselves guilty of that imaginary crime. In these deplorable instances, in what stage has the confession been conceived? To produce a frantic cry of guilty,—to produce the mark of a trembling hand to a paper full of calumnious lies, contents known or unknown,—these are effects to the production of which confusion of mind may be fully adequate, in the instance of the weakest and most ignorant certainly not less than in that of the strongest and best-informed minds."

In this connection it is interesting to observe, to the honour, or not, of the Roman law as it now obtains abroad, that penitential confessions to the

priests are encouraged for the relief of the conscience, and the priest is bound to secrecy by the peril of punishment. The actual expressions of the law are interesting and may be given in the original : "Confessio coram sacerdote in penitentiâ facta non probat in iudicio : *quia censetur facta coram Deo* ; imo, si sacerdos eam enunciet, incidet in pœnam." The priest may, however, with the express consent of the penitent, testify to the substance of the confession, and in all cases may testify to the fact that a confession has been made, and penance enjoined.

The English system may be less tender to the individual criminal, but follows a more strictly logical course with a view to the interests of society and the general repression of crime. It secures as co-operating agents on its side the influence of the passions and the general laws of human nature. It assumes that in some cases the loneliness of conscious guilt may become so desolating and destructive, that the offender will run as to a city of refuge into the very arms of justice and punishment. And the law of England goes on to conclude that the certainty of punishment may operate quite as much by way of solicitation to the delivery of the conscience as by way of discouragement. And in any case, and however the truth comes out, the country must have the benefit of it. Much may be said on either view of the problem. On the one hand it is of paramount importance that every crime should be thoroughly investigated, and, all its circumstances and agents having been brought into the light of day, that the penalty assigned should inexorably follow. On the other hand, a genuine sympathy for individual frailty will distinguish cases where the personal burden of a crime has been long borne, the crime itself deeply repented of, the criminal long changed into a new man, and, the alarm and danger due to the crime having long subsided, only evil and not good can come either from dilatory punishment or from hardy and torturing concealment. Such a case was that of Eugene Aram, or rather the imaginative portrait drawn of him in such ghastly colours by Hood. He is represented as unburdening his mind thirteen years after the crime, through the medium of a dream which he related to the boys of his school. The Continental system which favours priestly confession goes eminently to relieve the individual's torment ; in some cases, it may be, at the expense of public justice. The English practice throws the greatest discouragements in the way of self-accusation, but lays hold of it as invaluable testimony in all unexceptionable cases where it presents itself.

There is a further obstacle in the way of receiving confessions without the strictest caution, which is that there are numerous cases on record of persons confessing to grave crimes of which they were entirely guiltless. Not to speak of such anomalous incidents as attend the concentration of the public mind on any morbid phenomena, and which are often manifested in the self-surrender to justice of a number of innocent but deluded persons, there are several conceivable causes which may make the confession of the most serious crime by an innocent man a strictly reasonable course. Bentham has enumerated some of these, and it is possible to illustrate nearly all of them by well-known historical incidents. We have already

alluded to the practical torture often employed abroad in the course of the preliminary examination. If it were necessary in these days to controvert the general policy of all species of torture having confession for their object, it might be enough to refer to the account of the trial of Felton for the murder of the Duke of Buckingham. The Bishop of London is related to have said to him at his trial, "If you will not confess you must go to the rack." The prisoner replied, "If it must be so, I know not whom I may accuse in the extremity of my torture,—Bishop Laud perhaps, or any lord at this board." "Sound sense," observed Sir Michael Foster, "in the mouth of an enthusiast and a ruffian."

Very often a mere love of notoriety has been known to generate confessions of the most serious crimes. In the present days of cheap newspapers, where a hundred organs of popular information are swelling the fame of every reputed criminal within a few hours of his capture or surrender, this evil is likely to be on the increase. Lord Clarendon mentions the case of a Frenchman named Hubert, who after the fire of London confessed that he had set the first house on fire, and had been hired in Paris a year before to do it. The jury found him guilty, and he was executed. It would seem in this case, that another familiar motive of self-inculpation came into play; that is, mere heart-weariness and contempt of life. For the historian adds—"Though no man could imagine any reason why a man should so desperately throw away his life, which he might have saved, though he had been guilty, since he was accused only upon his own confession, yet neither the judges, nor any present at the trial, did believe him guilty, but that he was a poor distracted wretch, weary of life, and chose to part with it in this way."

Sometimes a desire to conceal the offence of another, or to conceal some greater offence committed by themselves, or, when a false conviction seems probable, any way to propitiate the awarders of punishment and secure better terms, has been known to lead to the self-accusation of innocent persons. There is a curious case which may serve to illustrate the last of these alternatives, and which is given by Mr. Wills in his very interesting essay of *Circumstantial Evidence*. Two brothers Brown were tried in the Supreme Court of Vermont, in September, 1819, for the murder of Russell Colvin, on May 10, 1812. Colvin was the brother-in-law of the prisoners, and a person of weak, and not perfectly sound mind: He was considered burdensome to the family of the prisoners, who were obliged to support him. On the day of his disappearance, being in a distant field, where the prisoners were at work, a violent quarrel broke out between them, and one of them struck him a violent blow on the back of the head with a club, which felled him to the ground. Some suspicions that he was murdered arose at the time, which were increased by the finding of his hat in the same field a few months afterwards. In 1819, it is said, one of the neighbours having repeatedly dreamed of the murder with great minuteness, both in regard to Colvin's death and the concealment of his remains, the prisoners were accused of the murder. Upon strict search, the pocket-knife of Colvin, and a button of his clothes, were found

in an old open cellar in the same field; and in a hollow stump not many rods off, were discovered two nails, and a number of bones believed to be those of a man. The prisoners confessed to the murder, and to the concealment of the body, and were convicted and sentenced to death. On the same day they applied to the legislature for a commutation of the sentence of death to that of perpetual imprisonment; which as to one only of them was granted. The confession was now withdrawn and contradicted, and on a reward being offered for the discovery of the missing man, he was found in New Jersey, and returned home in time to prevent the execution. He had fled for fear the prisoners would kill him. The bones were those of an animal. It is added, that the prisoners had been advised by some misjudging friends that as they would certainly be convicted upon the circumstances proved, their only chance for life was by a commutation of punishment; and that this depended on their making a penitential confession, and thereupon obtaining a recommendation to mercy.

It is manifest that in the cases of all confessions, and chiefly those not made in open court, or extra-judicial, extreme caution is needed in estimating the true value of what purports to be a confession, and determining whether, in fact, it really amounts to a confession or not. So-called confessions are often made to policemen, too often not the least ignorant and prejudiced men. We are all aware of the difficulty of truly reproducing another person's words, and especially when they form part of a continuous conversation. Sometimes an entirely mistaken colouring is given to a passage or dialogue through letting slip or misapprehending some material word. Then, again, much of the meaning of what we say is imparted to the actual words by our look, tone, emphasis, pauses, and even reticence. This is difficult to represent again accurately, even for an accomplished actor, with no disturbing feelings or proclivities. It is next to impossible to represent any part of all this for the average policeman. Similar sources of error are present even in the case of so-called written confessions. The instance is in point of a paper found in the prisoner's handwriting, charging him, the prisoner, with a crime; and yet it may have been the discourse of another person, and all false. Simple curiosity, or even the intention of refuting it in a private way or with the assistance of justice, might have been his motive for copying. Bentham gives the case of Jean Baptiste Rousseau, who wrote a virulent libel, injurious to many respectable characters, Saurin's among the rest, and circulated it in manuscript. Saurin, having borrowed one of these manuscripts, copied it with his own hand, for the purpose of answering it, or instituting a prosecution on the ground of it. Rousseau, hearing of this, or suspecting it, got possession of Saurin's copy, and, with the help of some false evidence for the explanation of it, instituted a prosecution against Saurin, charging him with being the author. The truth was discovered by the *vidæ voce* examination of the false witnesses. Bentham is our only authority for the truth of the anecdote. Whether true or not, it equally well illustrates the subject in hand.

There is one source of misapprehension which often infects the inter-

pretation of an imagined confession, and to which, it is believed, insufficient attention is paid. Either from ignorance of law, or from an infirm capacity of verbal expression, a man will sometimes utter what in words strictly amounts to a confession, but what was never intended for such. For instance, in a trial for receiving stolen goods, the question is put by the clerk of the court:—"Prisoner at the bar, how say you, are you guilty or not guilty?" "Guilty, my lord." "You say, prisoner, you received the goods, well knowing them to have been stolen." "No, my lord, I never knew as how they were stol'n." Or take another instance from a trial for an assault with intent to murder, or with intent to do grievous bodily harm—a prisoner will plead guilty, and, on being warned of the full and actual character of the whole offence, he will often enough shrink back in horror from the imputation, saying some such words as, "Not I, my lord, I never went to hurt a hair of his head." The same limitation applies to confessions, either written or spoken, out of court. It is quite conceivable a person insufficiently informed of the rather subtle definition of legal "murder" and the term "malice aforethought," might confess to having "murdered" another, merely meaning that it was his hand that struck the blow. That it was a maniacal act isolated from the state of mind before and afterwards, that it was the result of mere accident, or done in self-defence, that it was done in a state of sleep-walking, or partial obscurance of sense, or of intoxication, or violent mental provocation, would not seem to such a person relevant to the description of the act or crime. And these elements would appear less relevant, the more susceptible was the conscience of the person confessing and the more deeply imbued with remorse. That he was the immediate cause of the other's death makes him, in his own eyes, now purged and steadied, the murderer, and for him, in his new-born agony of repentance, the mere suggestion of the above modifications would savour of disingenuous sophistry and chicanery. Such a person might draw even a morbid pleasure from the self-chastisement involved in the very bareness of the confession and the exaggeration of the crime. The only corrective to any error that may be encountered on this ground in the use of confession is by a very careful examination (where that is allowed) of the person confessing, or, at the least, by a detailed explanation to him of the legal crime confessed to, and the exact legal bearing of the terms of the confession. In addition to this, so anomalous is the condition of a person voluntarily seeking the vengeance of the law, that stringent inquiry must be made as to the physiological and medical circumstances of the prisoner, both at the time of the crime and the time of the confession, and as to any influences from without that may have in anywise operated to distort his mind. These cautions are, above all things, applicable in the present day, when nervous phenomena are constantly cropping up of a startling and perplexing character, and when the almost epidemic irritability of the nervous system peculiarly exposes the feeble and sensitive to the influence of religious guides not always quite discreet.

Bentham has given two tests which are at all times applicable in the

process of duly estimating a voluntary confession. The first is, that "to operate in the character of direct evidence confession cannot be too *particular*." The value and ground of this touchstone of confession is that, in every case, a certain number of facts are established by evidence independent of the confession. Such facts should be multiplied as much as possible, even where in themselves they are not criminating nor directly and obviously material. Thus, the more the terms of the confession are distributed into minute and definite assertions, the greater possibility is afforded of confronting them with circumstances the truth of which is placed beyond dispute. There is a good old legal motto, which is very applicable here, *Latet dolus in generalibus*. This method of testing a confession is obviously of conspicuous efficacy where the self-accused is the victim of mere hallucination, frenzy, or diseased fancy. Dreams may have become confused with waking thoughts, fears may have become self-realized, actual events may have assumed wild and disproportionate greatness, and all may result in a suicidal impulse of self-sacrifice and self-condemnation. "The greater the particularity required on the part of the confession, the greater is the care taken of the confessionalist,—the greater the care taken to guard him against undue conviction, brought on him by his own imbecility and imprudence," or, we may add, by an unhealthy and predominant spirit of self-destruction. Among other obvious instances that might be given of the importance of applying in every case the crucial test of particularity, the melancholy history of witchcraft might easily supply some of the most significant. A miserable and ignorant wretch is reduced by torture to confess to having had communion with some supernatural being. If so, this singular and wholly irregular event must have been situated between some definite and cognizable periods of time, whether of hours or days, and must have been localized in some assignable place. Name those times and name that place. Again, there must have been some means of communication, some distinct and more or less intelligible language, signs, or acts. Let each or all of these be interpreted into words used by men and women on earth and told to us precisely. Say how the interview began, how it ended; what preceded it in your own conduct and what followed it; how often such a favour or dis-favour was vouchsafed to you, whether or not always in the same degree.

Now in the case of criminal procedure, the English law does not admit of the examination or rather cross-examination of the accused. Considering that the prisoner is here treated as a hostile witness against himself, this exemption is somewhat unreasonable. The notion rightly transudes the whole system of administrative justice in England that no *ex-parte* statement is worth a rush without cross-examination upon it. That is to say, that words possess so admirable a faculty (whether innate or acquired) of concealing thought, and that it is so possible to broach a falsehood by stating part of the truth, or understating or overstating or slightly distorting the whole truth, that unless the utterer of a speech, in his own interest or for his own purposes is compelled by

question and answer ruthlessly applied and extorted to explain to the full every word he uses, his speech just goes for nothing. The only exception to this necessary rule and invaluable principle is where a person may suffer the last penalty of the law on his own simple and uncontested statement. It is no doubt true that in practice justice is so far mercifully administered in England that in all such cases every precaution in the way of extra-judicial inquiry is in fact made, and every explanation and warning is afforded to the self-accused. It is, however, not unimportant to remember that the sifting mechanism of a rigid personal cross-examination of the only witness is out of use here, and in some cases it may be the only means of ascertaining the actual truth.

We need not dwell long upon Bentham's second test, as it is included in the first, and we have in some degree anticipated what might have been said in reference to it. This test is that "in respect of all material facts (especially the act which constitutes the physical part of the offence), the confession ought to comprehend a particular designation in respect of the circumstances of *time* and *places*." The reason of this rule is obvious, namely, in order that the allegations on these heads may be confronted with other known facts in the case. In some cases the hour, in others the day, will be relevant. In some cases the actual house, in others the town or even the country will come within the required minuteness. If by well-established facts it is known a man was in France, he could not have committed an offence at the same time in England. If a stack was set on fire at twelve o'clock at night and not before, at Blackacre farm, it could not have been set on fire by A., who, at half-past twelve, is sitting in the kitchen at Whiteacre farm, fourteen miles distant from Blackacre. This instance is not inapposite to the subject in hand, as there is no offence in which occur so many incalculable anomalies in the way of recklessness, self-surrender, and confessions, as in the offence of arson.

We have now examined the actual bearings of the law of England upon the method of imputing criminality implied in the word Confession. We have further considered how far the law is grounded on justice and reason, and have ventured to make a few practical suggestions affecting either its amendment or the manner of most prudently administering it. It was lately announced in a trial of no ordinary importance, and on the part of the oldest and not least able and experienced of English judges, that, with a view to the due discharge of their functions, the jury were not in a worse position, but in a better, for the previous discussion of the case by the public press. This proposition, even when backed by such an authority, will be looked upon by many of the stoutest supporters of the right of free debate as something more than questionable. Much may be said both ways, as much has been said. Thus much at least may be determined, that so far as the fluctuating opinion of the general public does operate at all on the administration of justice, the result will be more certain, steady, and beneficent, for the widest possible diffusion of accurate information on the subject in hand.

Provincialism.

THE increasing frequency of the use of the words "provincial" and "provincialism" in our popular literature, points to the gradual accomplishment of several changes well worthy of recognition and discussion. When Mr. Disraeli in one of his novels talks of a certain very stale simile as being avoided "even by provincial rhetoric," he suggests the exact questions which it is the object of this paper to answer. Is there such a thing as a provincial mind, and what are its characteristic features? How does provincialism differ from other and higher standards of thought and manners? And is its increasing distinctiveness of type a satisfactory symptom or otherwise? Here are social inquiries which it would require an immense deal of observation to enable a critic to *exhaust*; but which may be briefly touched on, perhaps, not without profit and amusement.

It is only fair to say—to begin with—that there is something distasteful to Englishmen about a word which, like "provincialism," implies by its very existence a certain disparagement of all life but the life of the capital. We form the word from the language of a people whose social and political conditions were unlike our own, and most unlike them in some points on which we chiefly pride ourselves. The politics of the Romans were based on cities; and their history is mainly the history of the growth of one great city, and the spread of its superiority over Italy and the world. Rome was recruited from all quarters, but it put its own stamp on every element which it acquired. The urban standard became the standard of culture and civilization; and the very languages, poetry, and customs of the country outside were allowed to become obsolete and die away in an obscurity very troublesome to modern inquirers. But the state of things with us has been widely different. Towns have played a great part in our history, but the first foundations of our constitution were territorial; and London, great and conspicuous as it has always been, has only had a share, though a large one, in the foundation of the empire. Not London, but a plain in Berkshire, witnessed the birth of Magna Charta. Famous Parliaments have been held at Winchester, Gloucester, Northampton, Oxford. Even Westminster Abbey (and Westminster of course, though practically now absorbed in the metropolis, has a distinct place in history) is without the tombs of such men as Shakspeare and Bacon, and of several of our greatest early kings. To this day, while London continues to absorb more and more of the life of the nation, the very word *counties* retains a dignity which the word *provinces* lacks. There is a fine historical smack about it, recalling

Hampden and Cromwell, Cavaliers and Ironsides. And our chief families, though passing such an important part of their lives in London, have never come to regard their lands as mere property. A Roman noble had many villas, but his chief greatness was at Rome. The chief greatness of an English noble is in his county. There he brings his bride to his ancestral home, and there he generally lays his bones with those of his ancestors, in the church containing the brasses of the best men of his line, or in a mausoleum itself buried among hereditary woods. The county feeling which made Speke proud of being a Somersetshire man, which makes a Devonshire man glory in Raleigh, a Northumberland man in Collingwood, and a Norfolk man in Nelson, is not provincialism. It may, and often does, co-exist with all the culture of capitals, and the widest experience of travel and life. We may note, too, as a set-off to the effect of railways in helping to swell the bulk of the metropolis, that if they bring the country into London, they also carry London into the country. The Londoner sees more of his own county and other counties than he used to do, and cockneyism diminishes from the same causes which diminish the rusticity of the provincial. We must always distinguish, however, between the Londoner and the cockney proper, as we distinguish between the country gentleman, or the accomplished man of the world of our chief country towns, and the provincial proper. Provincialism, in fact, may be defined as the counterpart of cockneyism,—as the cockneyism of country towns. For every city has its own cockneys. There are Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Dublin cockneys, just as London produces the typical breed from which they all derive the name. The *local man*, the man all whose prejudices are bred in him by the place, and who measures everything by the place's standard, is and must ever be a cockney, whether he lives in London, Boston, New York, Rome, or Constantinople. No one was more severe on cockneys than Professor Wilson,—and no one created more. He educated a batch of Edinburgh cockneys, who positively rioted in provincial ideas. They thought that every London man talked of h'objects and the h'atmosphere—held on by the mane of a horse—and was sea-sick in the finest weather. It is said that disciples of the school still exist, but the brains of the school having died with its founder, they are only known to those whom the accidents of life have put in the way of studying provincial oddities. On the other hand Sir William Hamilton was a very good specimen of the first-rate intellectual man not living at the head-quarters of intellect. With the keenest historical—he had none of the properly provincial character. So far from deifying the state of things in which he lived, he criticised and did his best to improve it. The age was past in which he could be thoroughly national; but at least he was never merely local. Accordingly his influence is felt, whether men accept his philosophy or not, in London as at Oxford and Paris; whereas much that Wilson wrote is uninteresting to people on the south of the Tweed, and is becoming obsolete as concerns the world at large.

There is something melancholy in contemplating the gradual decay of independent centres of intellect; in seeing what were once suns, though not of the greatest size, becoming mere satellites. The change is common to all countries. Paris was earlier, no doubt, than London, in asserting a thorough intellectual sway over the provinces. But even far on in the last century, the French provincial cities were the seats of a brilliantly intellectual life. What fine old libraries there are in the fine old Norman towns; and how rich Normandy is in archæological literature illustrative of its past! How pleasant to see in the library of Caen, the portraits of the great men—Corneille and Malherbe among many others—whom the ancient dukedom glories in having produced! What a high notion do the admirable letters from Italy of Charles de Brosses give of the circle at Dijon, for whom they were written some hundred and twenty years ago! But so it was among ourselves. England had a score of little capitals—capitals in miniature—instead of a single big one. York was a capital for the North; Shrewsbury for Wales and some of the Midland counties; Bath and Exeter for the West. Families of gentle blood and good manners made such towns their head-quarters; and if they visited London, did it as they would now visit Rome. There were Bath wits, and Dublin orators, and Edinburgh philosophers, famous all over the empire. A great scholar, like Dawes, was not to be found at the universities only, but at the head of the Newcastle Grammar School, squabbling with the corporation, and teaching his pupils when they came to the Greek word for “ass” to translate it “alderman.” Every region had its “characters,” its “humourists”—not mere oddities and rustics, but men who were good gentlemen, and often of sound wit and learning. London did not drain the intellectual life of the nation on the same scale; but a Roscoe seemed in his natural place at Liverpool, and a Scott at Edinburgh. A man of the country then differed from a London man in a way rather piquant than otherwise. He had a stamp of his own about him, an originality which compensated, and often more than compensated, for his disadvantages. Provincialism is the *residuum* which remains after the course of events has drawn the ablest local men away. Provincial manners are the manners of a local aristocracy, which is not the historical local aristocracy of a former age. Provincial politics are the politics of men who know nothing of any other. Provincial wit and literature are the wit and literature of those who, if they had more of both, would carry them to a better market, but who have just enough to make themselves distinguished where they are. Altogether, these phenomena present an amusing field of observation to persons whose experience has been different, when they first enter on the study of the provincial mind.

The provincial mind makes its earliest impression on an observer by the intensity of its local feeling. He finds a sense of citizenship coming over him which the illimitable life of a capital does not admit of. Everybody seems to know everything about everybody, and to dwell on details which are of no interest or importance. If a Pedlingtonian has become

famous in London as a painter, poet, or in any other way, Pedlington positively hugs the fact that his father was an innkeeper, or baker, or what not; and the local aristocracy (whose families gave up those degrading pursuits a whole century ago) are much less likely to be cordial to him than a Devereux or a Clinton. We remember a provincial clergyman who hardly ever had a chat with you without mentioning the fact that his pew-opener was the aunt of another clergyman in the town. At a certain stage of his gossip you instinctively felt that the anecdote was coming. "Apropos of the class of men who are taking orders now," he would say, "there's a curious fact about my pew-opener. You know Blobsby of St. Quintin's?" And so he went on. Now, this sort of gossip, it is to be feared, is relished everywhere; but there is something essentially provincial in making much of it. And we can easily see how the habit comes to be formed. The eyes of a provincial town are habitually fixed on a few people, and as a few people are soon exhausted, the interesting facts about them are frequently repeated. A new-comer hears the same anecdotes of the local celebrities, over and over again, wherever he goes. "Silkyton was a Radical, sir, at the time of the Reform Bill," says a Tory with whom Silkyton now acts. "I remember Gutter in an apron." "These Gubbinses, our chief booksellers, kept a stall in my father's days near the Independent Chapel," &c. Such close scrutiny as goes on within the narrow compass of provincial towns, more than anything else drives men away from them. Even the great lord of the neighbourhood is glad to escape to London, out of range of the telescopes pointed at his castle. And in some places anything like heretical or peculiar opinions would make a man's life miserable. He would be preached at from pulpits, and stared at in the streets. In London not a thousandth part of the population knows even the Prince of Wales, or the Prime Minister, by sight. If Rénan was to play at leap-frog with Bishop Colenso, on Hampstead Heath, it would excite little curiosity after the first few minutes. But the provincial mind is very personal; it likes to know every notability by head-mark. The man and his work are always viewed together. People don't ask what the *Journal* is saying, or what line the *Gazette* takes on a particular point; but what does Gutter say? or is Smugg opposed to the New Roads Bill? The provincial journalist is at the mercy of the public in a way unknown in London. A stranger without an introduction, or a previous appointment, could no more get at the editor of *The Times* or *Daily News*, than he could drop in on the Pope. But in provincial towns the unlucky editor is regarded as common property, and his office is as much a "place of call" for the party to which he belongs as the "Black Bull" or the "Montfichet Arms." Nay, he is pursued to his private dwelling, and while one visitor has hold of him in his parlour, another is waiting for him in the drawing-room, and a third in the study. There is a prevailing impression that he writes the whole paper, and he is expected to remember every paragraph that has appeared for three months back. Nothing is more provincial than the provincial

press. It is intensely local. Playful allusions of a personal character to the doctor's gig, to the rector's coat, are introduced for the sake of *colour*, especially in the obituary notices, where we are told how "the stick freely revolving on its axis," of the departed Pedlingtonian, gave a picturesque character to his walk. There is not much independence in the provincial press, and it mostly flatters the popular feeling of those whom it addresses. The "local paper" always keeps up the prevailing fiction that there is something about the particular town in which it is published, making it superior to other towns of the same size. When a lecture or a concert is criticised, we are told that Mr. Blogg or Miss Squally was "just a little nervous, this being his (or her) first appearance before a Reekyborough audience." The lecturer or singer, it is implied, may do well enough for Goosedubton; but Reekyborough is another affair. If you draw law-deeds or feel pulses in *that* city, there is a magic in the air which makes you a superior person. This is particularly noticeable in towns once the residence of a considerable local aristocracy. The modern inhabitants fancy that they derive a certain character from the fact, as whisky is coloured by being kept in a sherry cask. In one of our country towns the peerage is still represented by a brass door-plate bearing the name of an earl, and it is pointed out to strangers (the earl never lives there by the way) as if it was a work of art.

The duty of keeping up the local worship which is such an important element in provincialism is generally assumed by one or two gentlemen of a literary turn resident in the place. A genius of this kind usually combines some other and more profitable profession with that of historian-grapher and poet-laureate. Sometimes he is a doctor, whose quotations help to carry his pills down, and who is the great authority on the literary gossip of the day. When a famous man wanders into the neighbourhood, the doctor gets early information of the fact, and shows infinite patience and dexterity in coaxing him to the dinners and evenings of his best patients. The hospitality of Mrs. Leo Hunter now-a-days is not remarkable. She is "*leonum arida nutrix*," and gives her guests but scanty fare, though always of the genteelst kind. But at such scenes, Dr. Busyman, the local *littérateur*, is up to his neck in his own element; sticking close to the lion of the night, that everybody may see who caught him; introducing to him those whose goodwill secures practice and dinners; and helping him on with his great-coat at the close of the proceedings. Every town has its Busyman. It is they who write "Promenades in Pedlington," "Lays of the Pedlingtonians," and so forth; and at public dinners they return thanks for such toasts as "The Progress of Science," or "Literature and Art." To them the provincial editor looks for his memoir of the last of the great men of the neighbourhood whom death has removed. And he repays such services with many a hearty puff in his peculiar vein. "Another photograph," he will say, "of our gifted Busyman has been issued by our gifted Chick. How unctuous, with all its own humour, that mouth! What a depth

of thought in that eye!" But his favourite way of describing the object of his admiration is by the name of some other—though generally rather different—great man. Britain is full of Lambs, and Hoods, and Gibbons. There is the Hood of Pedlington, the Gibbon of Goosedubton, the Reekyborough Lamb, and many others. It must be an odd sensation to be a Lamb in Reekyborough and nowhere else! When such a man steps into the train he puts his aureole of fame in his pocket, and awakes at Euston Square to find himself as obscure as the waiter. Not a little of the bitterness with which the true provincial mind sometimes speaks of the metropolis is to be attributed to this fact. The jealousy, meanwhile, of provincial celebrities is embittered by the narrowness of the sphere in which they move. They must see and hear of each other whether they like it or not. There are cliques everywhere; but the smaller the cliques the more rigid the cliquism. We have heard of a man jumping out of a mourning coach at a funeral because a rival came in, and being rapidly imitated in the movement by a member of his professional tail. At one provincial town of our acquaintance boasting a university, members of the *Senatus* used to shake their fists at each other in periods of great excitement, and on one such occasion a Professor was heard to inform the Rector that "he did not care for him the fraction of a d—n." It is not always easy to get up a dinner-party in a place of this kind. You have to consider whether A will meet B, and whether C won't spoil the digestion of D. And the probable amount of an unpopular public man's debt to his butcher has been known to form an item of polite and festive conversation.

All party passions, political or ecclesiastical, rage with peculiar fury in the provincial mind; and party divisions are apt to affect social life in an undue degree. In Ireland there will be a room full of Protestants enjoying themselves on one side of the street, and a room full of Catholics on the other. "We are all Conservatives here," your neighbour at a Pedlington dinner tells you, while the faithful waiter (whom you have seen at other hospitable boards) is bringing round the champagne. "The red-haired fellow opposite is a Dissenter," says little Bobo, with an uneasy air, passing the claret-jug. What of that?—think you, on each occasion. But nowhere are people more carefully ticketed, or kept in their proper sets, than in provincial towns; and able and genial men will pass years almost in sight of each other, without ever coming together except at a public meeting. Such divisions perpetuate discord and encourage violence. No wonder, then, that there is so much personality in the provincial press. It is sometimes thought comic to allude to a political adversary as "The Snake," and a public man is watched in his private hours to see if he does anything inconsistent with his opinions on public questions. Woe, for instance, to the unlucky parson who, having strong views on what he calls the "Sabbath question," has walked to his church on Sunday through *the gardens* of the city! "Argus" sends a letter to the right quarter, and the parish humourist, who takes charge of the cause of

popular freedom, is down upon the reverend man. There is a strange vitality, too, about jokes in genuine provincial regions. They seem to keep fresh in a wonderful way, though this, of course, depends a good deal on the sensitiveness of the nose. If a provincial editor has once made a hit by a sarcasm or a nickname, he repeats it with judicious frequency; for he cannot be sure that a new jest will be successful, while he *is* sure that its production will be troublesome.

One very marked feature of those towns in which the provincial mind rules is their jealousy of each other. Some curious results of this have been seen in Scotland, where the boroughs are arranged in groups, so that five boroughs return a member among them. If one of these boroughs can, owing to the balance of parties in the others, *determine* the result, by voting as a whole, it will sometimes vote as a whole, regardless of politics, for the sake of the triumph of being master of the situation. This may be called "essence of provincialism;" and reminds one of the gentleman who, during a great fire at the Post Office, was heard calling to the fire-engine men "to play upon the Stoke-Pogis bag." Jealousy between town and town has been stimulated by the change which has gradually come about in the relations of towns. Now-a-days, the official superiority often rests with one place, while the other is infinitely beyond it in actual importance. It was but lately that Leeds complained of a want of proper recognition in Yorkshire; and at the other end of the country we see Brighton overshadowing Lewes, and Southampton Portsmouth. This kind of thing is going on in many parts; and never produces such a curious state of feeling as when a small old town with a small "genteel" society is offended by the rapid development and overbearing prosperity of some less distinguished neighbour. Human audacity, one hopes, would never go the length of addressing a letter to "Warwick Castle, *near Leamington*." But if Warwick would be likely to burn such a letter by the hands of the common hangman—Leamington being quite a "genteel" place—think what the feelings of a well-regulated local mind must be when obscured by the opulent proximity of some mere seat of plebeian industry! A small squire in a county we know, whose cousin was being courted by a county doctor, used always when he met the medical gent's gig in the lanes to hold his nose—cruelly and falsely pretending, thereby, to protect himself from the smell of pills. This is the natural attitude of the "genteel" towns in the case we have supposed. But just as the county doctor's gig continued to roll on, and one day drove the small squire's cousin home as the doctor's wife, so natural growths based on the new condition of things are not to be stopped. We mentioned Scotland just now. Among other signs that Scottish nationality, in its proper sense, is on the wane, must be reckoned the growing indifference of the rest of Scotland to the old pretensions of Edinburgh. For ages, of course, it has ceased to be the capital of the Scottish aristocracy. But we now find Scotch Members opposing measures of the Lord Advocate's, on the ground that they tend to create

places for members of the Edinburgh bar. Glasgow, meanwhile, and the rich West is annoyed that its law business should all have to come to the Edinburgh Court of Session. Perhaps the most amusing form that the rivalry of the two cities takes is a periodical controversy as to which drinks the most whisky and cuts the worst figure in the police returns. This pot and kettle—or rather kettle and kettle fight—is annually fought out by provincial journalists, to the regret of the best men, but to the infinite delectation of the *bonâ fide* provincial mind.

The peculiar narrowness which is so characteristic of provincialism produces some important results on the public life of the country. What are called "local" claims are often pushed to an extreme in elections; and the big brewer or banker, who subscribes to the races and the infirmary, and who can afford to give big dinners during the session to his supporters, is returned to Parliament, to the exclusion of men of brains, culture, and distinction. Provincialism fosters religious bigotry also; sends up petitions of a ferociously Sabbatarian and ultra-Protestant character; and is apt to support proposals for enabling men to deprive their neighbours of malt liquor. All this comes from the higher elements of such place having gravitated under the influence of centralization; or from what is left of those elements being swamped by the second and third rate people among whom it is left. Why does a great town like Newcastle, for instance, exclude novels from its literary institution? Simply because the physical sciences are more immediately profitable to the growth of the place—an essentially provincial reason. Every "place" ought to be, according to its resources, a fair type of the whole civilization of the country; strong, of course, in the particular points for which nature and history have marked it out; but not destitute of, or hostile to, whatever adds to the charm, culture, grace, and general humanity of other places. The tendency of the provincial spirit, however, is to devote one town to coals, a second to cotton, a third to iron, and so on; and to drive everything else away to seek its fortune. The Northern cities have allowed the University of Durham to decline, not because they prefer Oxford and Cambridge, but because they are indifferent to the kind of education which it is willing to give. The decay of so many old grammar schools in county-towns is another symptom of the same kind. When once a town is attacked by provincialism, it loses its relish for ideas—its intellectual ambition. Naturally the able men born in it begin to run away. At last comes a stage when it imports its ideas, like the fashions, from London, and gets its intellectual life down by the train. When we remember what the general run of "letters from London correspondents" are, we understand the condition to which provincial intellect may be reduced. The dependence of such readers on the metropolis is becoming very remarkable. Many provincial journals receive their best articles from London, and there is an office indeed which sends them down by the afternoon trains ready printed.

Surely all this may be pushed too far? It seems to us pleasant to

think of Shakspeare retiring to Stratford; of Bacon ordering that he should be buried in St. Michael's Church, St. Albans, "because it is the parish church of my mansion-house of Gorhambury;" of Cowper at Olney; of Scott in his ancestral border district; of James Montgomery at Sheffield; of a thousand associations scattered over England, and enriching the national life, like the many rivers which flow, *not* to swell the Thames, but to the four seas. Provincialism robs the provinces of their poetry, as cockneyism, if it was allowed to get the upper hand, would degrade the Abbey and vulgarise the Tower. And it tends to perpetuate itself. Many a Scotchman would be content to stay in Scotland if the ecclesiastical bigotry were diminished; if the universities were made what they ought to be; if society would shake itself clear of the petty and contracted way of looking at things, which comes of nursing insignificant distinctions, and cultivating frigidity as a condition of politeness. The late Lord Eglinton was a Scot to the backbone; but when he was Viceroy of Ireland, he used to defend that office as helping to save Dublin from the provincialism which had overtaken Edinburgh. We have already shown in what sense we use the word; and that, according to that sense, every man who lives in the provinces is not a provincial, any more than every Londoner is a cockney. By general consent, however, there is a certain type of mind and manners which the world agrees to recognize under the name, and which must be better understood before it can be altered. For the influences which are to alter it, the provinces will have to look to London itself. The provinces feed London, and London in time will make up to them for what it has taken away. The double action of the railway system has been already referred to. It draws life to a centre, but it radiates it from the centre; the metropolis attracts more and more people, but it also sends more and more visitors back. As time rolls on, English life will interpenetrate itself by the action and reaction of its different elements, to a degree of which as yet no observer can form a conception; though, it is to be hoped, without destroying the local independence which is one of the bases of our political freedom. And while the Londoner becomes more a man of the country, and the man of the country more a Londoner, cockneyism and provincialism may be expected to recede together into the past.

Wives and Daughters.

AN EVERY-DAY STORY.

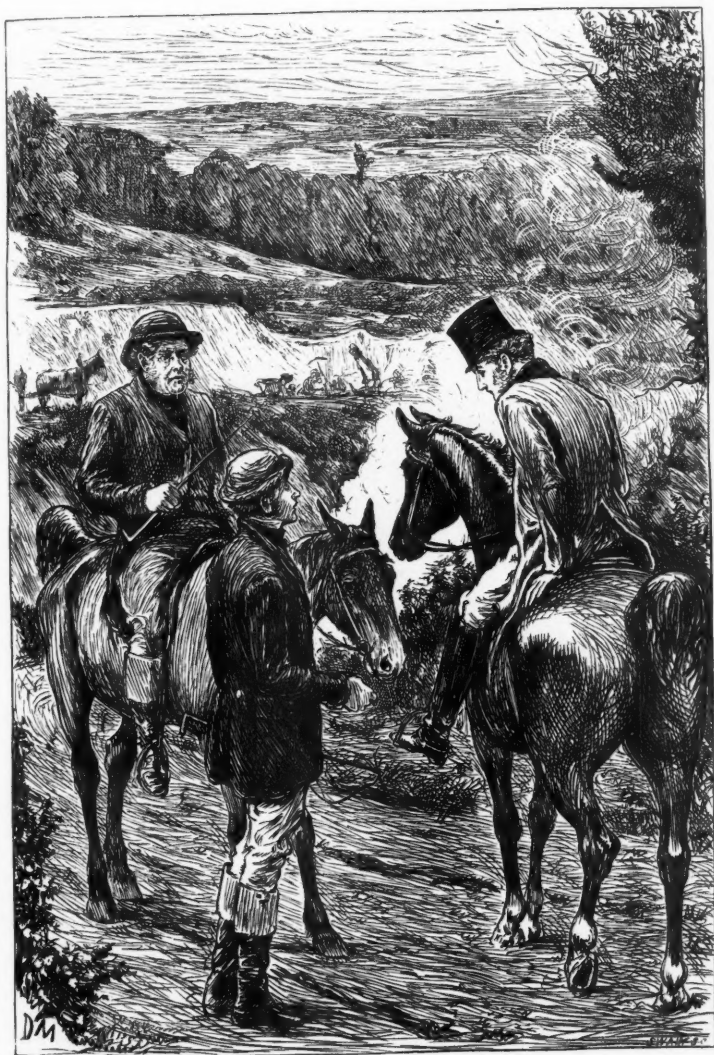
CHAPTER XXX.

OLD WAYS AND NEW WAYS.



R. PRESTON was now installed in his new house at Hollingford; Mr. Sheepshanks having entered into dignified idleness at the house of his married daughter, who lived in the county town. His successor had plunged with energy into all manner of improvements; and among others he fell to draining a piece of outlying waste and unreclaimed land of Lord Cumnor's, which was close to Squire Hamley's property; that very piece for which he had had the Government grant, but which now lay neglected, and only half-drained, with stacks of mossy tiles, and lines of up-turned furrows telling of abortive plans. It was not often that the squire rode in this direction now-a-

days; but the cottage of a man who had been the squire's gamekeeper in those more prosperous days when the Hamleys could afford to preserve, was close to the rush-grown ground. This old servant and tenant was ill, and had sent a message up to the Hall, asking to see the squire; not to reveal any secret, or to say anything particular, but only from the feudal loyalty, which made it seem to the dying man as if it would be a comfort to shake the hand, and look once more into the eyes of the lord and master whom he had served, and whose ancestors his own forbears had served for so many generations. And the squire was as fully alive as old Silas to the claims of the tie that existed between them. Though he hated the thought, and, still more, should hate the sight of the piece of land, on the side of which Silas's cottage stood, the squire ordered his horse, and rode off within half-an-hour of receiving the message. As he drew near the spot he thought he heard the sound of tools, and the hum of many voices, just as he used to



THE BURNING OF THE GORSE.

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hear them a year or two before. He listened with surprise. Yes. Instead of the still solitude he had expected, there was the clink of iron, the heavy gradual thud of the fall of barrows-full of soil—the cry and shout of labourers. But not on his land—better worth expense and trouble by far than the reedy clay common on which the men were, in fact, employed. He knew it was Lord Cumnor's property; and he knew Lord Cumnor and his family had gone up in the world ("the Whig rascals!"), both in wealth and in station, as the Hamleys had gone down. But all the same—in spite of long known facts, and in spite of reason—the squire's ready anger rose high at the sight of his neighbour doing what he had been unable to do, and he a Whig; and his family only in the county since Queen Anne's time. He went so far as to wonder whether they might not—the labourers he meant—avail themselves of his tiles, lying so conveniently close to hand. All these thoughts, regrets, and wonders were in his mind as he rode up to the cottage he was bound to, and gave his horse in charge to a little lad, who had hitherto found his morning's business and amusement in playing at "houses" with a still younger sister, with some of the squire's neglected tiles. But he was old Silas's grandson, and he might have battered the rude red earthenware to pieces—a whole stack—one by one, and the squire would have said little or nothing. It was only that he would not spare one to a labourer of Lord Cumnor's. No! not one.

Old Silas lay in a sort of closet, opening out of the family living-room. The small window that gave it light looked right on to the "moor," as it was called; and by day the check curtain was drawn aside so that he might watch the progress of the labour. Everything about the old man was clean, of course; and, with Death, the leveller, so close at hand, it was the labourer who made the first advances, and put out his horny hand to the squire.

"I thought you'd come, squire. Your father came for to see my father as he lay a-dying."

"Come, come, my man!" said the squire, easily affected, as he always was. "Don't talk of dying, we shall soon have you out, never fear. They've sent you up some soup from the Hall, as I bade 'em, haven't they?"

"Ay, ay, I've had all as I could want for to eat and to drink. The young squire and Master Roger was here yesterday."

"Yes, I know."

"But I'm a deal nearer Heaven to-day, I am. I should like you to look after the covers in the West Spinney, squire; them gorse, you know, where th' old fox had her hole—her as give 'em so many a run. You'll mind it, squire, though you was but a lad. I could laugh to think on her tricks yet." And, with a weak attempt at a laugh, he got himself into a violent fit of coughing, which alarmed the squire, who thought he would never get his breath again. His daughter-in-law came in at the sound, and told the squire that he had these coughing-bouts very frequently, and that she thought he would go off in one of them before long. This

opinion of hers was spoken simply out before the old man, who now lay gasping and exhausted upon his pillow. Poor people acknowledge the inevitableness and the approach of death in a much more straightforward manner than is customary among more educated folk. The squire was shocked at her hard-heartedness, as he considered it; but the old man himself had received much tender kindness in return from his daughter-in-law; and what she had just said was no more news to him than the fact that the sun would rise to-morrow. He was more anxious to go on with his story.

"Them navvies—I call 'em navvies because some on 'em is strangers, though some on 'em is th' men as was turned off your own works, squire, when there came orders to stop 'em last fall—they're a-pulling up gorse and brush to light their fire for warming up their messes. It's a long way off to their homes, and they mostly dine here; and there'll be nothing of a cover left, if you don't see after 'em. I thought I should like to tell ye afore I died. Parson's been here; but I did na tell him. He's all for the earl's folk, and he'd not ha' heeded. It's the earl as put him into his church, I reckon, for he said what a fine thing it were for to see so much employment a-given to the poor, and he never said nought o' th' sort when your works were agait, squire."

This long speech had been interrupted by many a cough and gasp for breath; and having delivered himself of what was on his mind, he turned his face to the wall, and appeared to be going to sleep. Presently he roused himself with a start.

"I know I flogged him well, I did. But he were after pheasants' eggs, and I didn't know he were an orphan. Lord, forgive me!"

"He's thinking on David Morton, the cripple, as used to go about trapping venison," whispered the woman.

"Why, he died long ago—twenty year, I should think," replied the squire.

"Ay, but when grandfather goes off i' this way to sleep after a bout of talking he seems to be dreaming on old times. He'll not waken up yet, sir; you'd best sit down if you'd like to stay," she continued, as she went into the house-place and dusted a chair with her apron. "He was very particular in bidding me wake him if he were asleep, and you or Mr. Roger was to call. Mr. Roger said he'd be coming again this morning—but he'll likely sleep an hour or more, if he's let alone."

"I wish I'd said good-by, I should like to have done that."

"He drops off so sudden," said the woman. "But if you'd be better pleased to have said it, squire, I'll waken him up a bit."

"No, no!" the squire called out as the woman was going to be as good as her word. "I'll come again, perhaps to-morrow. And tell him I was sorry; for I am indeed. And be sure and send to the Hall for anything you want! Mr. Roger is coming, is he? He'll bring me word how he is, later on. I should like to have bidden him good-by."

So, giving sixpence to the child who had held his horse, the squire

mounted. He sat still a moment, looking at the busy work going on before him, and then at his own half-completed drainage. It was a bitter pill. He had objected to borrowing from Government, in the first instance; and then his wife had persuaded him to the step; and after it was once taken, he was as proud as could be of the only concession to the spirit of progress he ever made in his life. He had read and studied the subject pretty thoroughly, if also very slowly, during the time his wife had been influencing him. He was tolerably well up in agriculture, if in nothing else; and at one time he had taken the lead among the neighbouring landowners, when he first began tile-drainage. In those days people used to speak of Squire Hamley's hobby; and at market ordinaries, or county dinners, they rather dreaded setting him off on long repetitions of arguments from the different pamphlets on the subject which he had read. And now the proprietors all around him were draining—draining; his interest to Government was running on all the same, though his works were stopped, and his tiles deteriorating in value. It was not a soothing consideration, and the squire was almost ready to quarrel with his shadow. He wanted a vent for his ill-humour; and suddenly remembering the devastations on his covers, which he had heard about not a quarter of an hour before, he rode up to the men busy at work on Lord Cumnor's land. Just before he got up to them he encountered Mr. Preston, also on horseback, come to overlook his labourers. The squire did not know him personally, but from the agent's manner of speaking, and the deference that was evidently paid to him, Mr. Hamley saw that he was a responsible person. So he addressed the agent:—"I beg your pardon, I suppose you are the manager of these works?"

Mr. Preston replied,—“Certainly. I am that and many other things besides, at your service. I have succeeded Mr. Sheepshanks in the management of my lord's property. Mr. Hamley of Hamley, I believe?”

The squire bowed stiffly. He did not like his name to be asked or presumed upon in that manner. An equal might conjecture who he was, or recognize him, but, till he announced himself, an inferior had no right to do more than address him respectfully as “sir.” That was the squire's code of etiquette.

“I am Mr. Hamley of Hamley. I suppose you are as yet ignorant of the boundary of Lord Cumnor's land, and so I will inform you that my property begins at the pond yonder—just where you see the rise in the ground.”

“I am perfectly acquainted with that fact, Mr. Hamley,” said Mr. Preston, a little annoyed at the ignorance attributed to him. “But may I inquire why my attention is called to it just now?”

The squire was beginning to boil over; but he tried to keep his temper in. The effort was very much to be respected, for it was a great one. There was something in the handsome and well-dressed agent's tone and manner inexpressibly irritating to the squire, and it was not lessened by an involuntary comparison of the capital roadster on which Mr. Preston was mounted with his own ill-groomed and aged cob.

"I have been told that your men out yonder do not respect these boundaries, but are in the habit of plucking up gorse from my covers to light their fires."

"It is possible they may!" said Mr. Preston, lifting his eyebrows, his manner being more nonchalant than his words. "I daresay they think no great harm of it. However, I'll inquire."

"Do you doubt my word, sir?" said the squire, fretting his mare till she began to dance about. "I tell you I've heard it only within this last half-hour."

"I don't mean to doubt your word, Mr. Hamley; it's the last thing I should think of doing. But you must excuse my saying that the argument which you have twice brought up for the authenticity of your statement, 'that you have heard it within the last half-hour,' is not quite so forcible as to preclude the possibility of a mistake."

"I wish you'd only say in plain language that you doubt my word," said the squire, clenching and slightly raising his horsewhip. "I can't make out what you mean—you use so many words."

"Pray don't lose your temper, sir. I said I should inquire. You have not seen the men pulling up gorse yourself, or you would have named it. I surely may doubt the correctness of your information until I have made some inquiry; at any rate, that is the course I shall pursue, and if it gives you offence, I shall be sorry, but I shall do it just the same. When I am convinced that harm has been done to your property, I shall take steps to prevent it for the future, and of course, in my lord's name, I shall pay you compensation—it may probably amount to half-a-crown." He added these last words in a lower tone, as if to himself, with a slight, contemptuous smile on his face.

"Quiet, mare, quiet," said the squire, quite unaware that he was the cause of her impatient movements by the way he was perpetually tightening her reins; and also, perhaps, he unconsciously addressed the injunction to himself.

Neither of them saw Roger Hamley, who was just then approaching them with long, steady steps. He had seen his father from the door of old Silas's cottage, and, as the poor fellow was still asleep, he was coming to speak to his father, and was near enough now to hear the next words.

"I don't know who you are, but I've known land-agents who were gentlemen, and I've known some who were not. You belong to this last set, young man," said the squire, "that you do. I should like to try my horsewhip on you for your insolence."

"Pray, Mr. Hamley," replied Mr. Preston, coolly, "curb your temper a little, and reflect. I really feel sorry to see a man of your age in such a passion"—moving a little farther off, however, but really more with a desire to save the irritated man from carrying his threat into execution, out of a dislike to the slander and excitement it would cause, than from any personal dread. Just at this moment Roger Hamley came close up. He

was panting a little, and his eyes were very stern and dark; but he spoke quietly enough.

"Mr. Preston, I can hardly understand what you mean by your last words. But, remember, my father is a gentleman of age and position, and not accustomed to receive advice as to the management of his temper from young men like you."

"I desired him to keep his men off my land," said the squire to his son—his wish to stand well in Roger's opinion restraining his temper a little; but though his words might be a little calmer, there were all other signs of passion present—the discoloured complexion, the trembling hands, the fiery cloud in his eyes. "He refused, and doubted my word."

Mr. Preston turned to Roger, as if appealing from Philip drunk to Philip sober, and spoke in a tone of cool explanation, which, though not insolent in words, was excessively irritating in manner.

"Your father has misunderstood me—perhaps it is no wonder," trying to convey, by a look of intelligence at the son, his opinion that the father was in no state to hear reason. "I never refused to do what was just and right. I only required further evidence as to the past wrong-doing; your father took offence at this"—and then he shrugged his shoulders, and lifted his eyebrows in a manner he had formerly learnt in France.

"At any rate, sir! I can scarcely reconcile the manner and words to my father, which I heard you use when I first came up, with the deference you ought to have shown to a man of his age and position. As to the fact of the trespass——"

"They are pulling up all the gorse, Roger—there'll be no cover whatever for game soon," put in the squire.

Roger bowed to his father, but took up his speech at the point it was at before the interruption.

"I will inquire into it myself at a cooler moment; and if I find that such trespass or damage has been committed, of course I shall expect that you will see it put a stop to. Come, father! I am going to see old Silas—perhaps you don't know that he is very ill." So he endeavoured to wile the squire away to prevent further words. He was not entirely successful.

Mr. Preston was enraged by Roger's calm and dignified manner, and threw after them this parting shaft, in the shape of a loud soliloquy,—

"Position, indeed! What are we to think of the position of a man who begins works like these without counting the cost, and comes to a stand-still, and has to turn off his labourers just at the beginning of winter, leaving——"

They were too far off to hear the rest. The squire was on the point of turning back before this, but Roger took hold of the reins of the old mare, and led her over some of the boggy ground, as if to guide her into sure footing, but, in reality, because he was determined to prevent the renewal of the quarrel. It was well that the cob knew him, and was, indeed, old enough to prefer quietness to dancing; for Mr. Hamley plucked hard at

the reins, and at last broke out with an oath,—“Damn it, Roger! I’m not a child; I won’t be treated as such. Leave go, I say!”

Roger let go; they were not on firm ground, and he did not wish any watchers to think that he was exercising any constraint over his father; and this quiet obedience to his impatient commands did more to soothe the squire than anything else could have effected just then.

“I know I turned them off—what could I do? I’d no more money for their weekly wages; it’s a loss to me, as you know. He doesn’t know, no one knows, but I think your mother would, how it cut me to turn ’em off just before winter set in. I lay awake many a night thinking of it, and I gave them what I had—I did, indeed. I hadn’t got money to pay ’em, but I had three barren cows fattened, and gave every scrap of meat to the men, and I let ’em go into the woods and gather what was fallen, and I winked at their breaking off old branches, and now to have it cast up against me by that cur—that servant. But I’ll go on with the works, by —, I will, if only to spite him. I’ll show him who I am. My position, indeed! A Hamley of Hamley takes a higher position than his master. I’ll go on with the works, see if I don’t! I’m paying between one and two hundred a year interest on Government money. I’ll raise some more if I go to the Jews; Osborne has shown me the way, and Osborne shall pay for it—he shall. I’ll not put up with insults. You shouldn’t have stopped me, Roger! I wish to heaven I’d horsewhipped the fellow!”

He was lashing himself again into an impotent rage, painful to a son to witness; but just then the little grandchild of old Silas, who had held the squire’s horse during his visit to the sick man, came running up, breathless:

“Please, sir, please, squire, mammy has sent me; grandfather has wakened up sudden, and mammy says he’s dying, and would you please come; she says he’d take it as a kind compliment, she’s sure.”

So they went to the cottage, the squire speaking never a word, but suddenly feeling as if lifted out of a whirlwind and set down in a still and awful place.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A PASSIVE COQUETTE.

It is not to be supposed that such an encounter as Mr. Preston had just had with Roger Hamley sweetened the regards in which the two young men henceforward held each other. They had barely spoken to each other before, and but seldom met; for the land-agent’s employment had hitherto lain at Ashcombe, some sixteen or seventeen miles from Hamley. He was older than Roger by several years; but during the time he had been in the country Osborne and Roger had been at school and at college. Mr. Preston was prepared to dislike the Hamleys for

many unreasonable reasons. Cynthia and Molly had both spoken of the brothers with familiar regard, implying considerable intimacy; their flowers had been preferred to his on the occasion of the ball; most people spoke well of them; and Mr. Preston had an animal's instinctive jealousy and combativeness against all popular young men. Their "position"—poor as the Hamleys might be—was far higher than his own in the county; and, moreover, he was agent to the great Whig lord, whose political interests were diametrically opposed to those of the old Tory squire. Not that Lord Cumnor troubled himself much about his political interests. His family had obtained property and title from the Whigs at the time of the Hanoverian succession; and so, traditionally, he was a Whig, and had belonged in his youth to Whig clubs, where he had lost considerable sums of money to Whig gamblers. All this was satisfactory and consistent enough. And if Lord Hollingford had not been returned for the county on the Whig interest—as his father had been before him, until he had succeeded to the title—it is quite probable Lord Cumnor would have considered the British constitution in danger, and the patriotism of his ancestors ungratefully ignored. But, excepting at elections, he had no notion of making Whig and Tory a party cry. He had lived too much in London, and was of too sociable a nature, to exclude any man who jumped with his humour, from the hospitality he was always ready to offer, be the agreeable acquaintance Whig, Tory, or Radical. But in the county of which he was lord-lieutenant, the old party distinction was still a shibboleth by which men were tested for their fitness for social intercourse, as well as on the hustings. If by any chance a Whig found himself at a Tory dinner-table—or vice versa—the food was hard of digestion, and wine and viands were criticized rather than enjoyed. A marriage between the young people of the separate parties was almost as unheard-of and prohibited an alliance as that of Romeo and Juliet's. And of course Mr. Preston was not a man in whose breast such prejudices would die away. They were an excitement to him for one thing, and called out all his talent for intrigue on behalf of the party to which he was allied. Moreover, he considered it as loyalty to his employer to "scatter his enemies" by any means in his power. He had always hated and despised the Tories in general; and after that interview on the marshy common in front of Silas's cottage, he hated the Hamleys and Roger especially, with a very choice and particular hatred. "That prig," as hereafter he always designated Roger—"he shall pay for it yet," he said to himself by way of consolation, after the father and son had left him. "What a lout it is!"—watching the receding figures. "The old chap has twice as much spunk," as the squire tugged at his bridle-reins. "The old mare could make her way better without being led, my fine fellow. But I see through your dodge. You're afraid of your old father turning back and getting into another rage. Position indeed! a beggarly squire—a man who did turn off his men just before winter, to rot or starve, for all he cared—it's just like a venal old Tory." And, under the

cover of sympathy with the dismissed labourers, Mr. Preston indulged his own private pique very pleasantly.

Mr. Preston had many causes for rejoicing : he might have forgotten this discomfiture, as he chose to feel it, in the remembrance of an increase of income, and in the popularity he enjoyed in his new abode. All Hollingsford came forward to do the earl's new agent honour. Mr. Sheepshanks had been a crabbed, crusty old bachelor, frequenting inn-parlours on market-days, not unwilling to give dinners to three or four chosen friends and familiars, with whom, in return, he dined from time to time, and with whom, also, he kept up an amicable rivalry in the matter of wines. But he "did not appreciate female society," as Miss Browning elegantly worded his unwillingness to accept the invitations of the Hollingsford ladies. He was unrefined enough to speak of these invitations to his intimate friends aforesaid in the following manner, "Those old women's worrying," but, of course, they never heard of this. Little quarter-of-sheet notes, without any envelopes—that invention was unknown in those days—but sealed in the corners when folded up instead of gummed as they are fastened at present, occasionally passed between Mr. Sheepshanks and the Miss Brownings, Mrs. Goodenough or others. In the first instance, the form ran as follows :—"Miss Browning and her sister, Miss Phæbe Browning, present their respectful compliments to Mr. Sheepshanks, and beg to inform him that a few friends have kindly consented to favour them with their company at tea on Thursday next. Miss Browning and Miss Phæbe will take it very kindly if Mr. Sheepshanks will join their little circle."

Now for Mrs. Goodenough.

"Mrs. Goodenough's respects to Mr. Sheepshanks, and hopes he is in good health. She would be very glad if he would favour her with his company to tea on Monday. My daughter, in Combermere, has sent me a couple of guinea-fowls, and Mrs. Goodenough hopes Mr. Sheepshanks will stay and take a bit of supper."

No need for the dates of the days of the month. The good ladies would have thought that the world was coming to an end if the invitation had been sent out a week before the party therein named. But not even guinea-fowls for supper could tempt Mr. Sheepshanks. He remembered the made-wines he had tasted in former days at Hollingsford parties, and shuddered. Bread-and-cheese, with a glass of bitter-beer, or a little brandy-and-water, partaken of in his old clothes (which had worn into shapes of loose comfort, and smelt strongly of tobacco), he liked better than roast guinea-fowl and birch-wine, even without throwing into the balance the stiff uneasy coat, and the tight neckcloth and tighter shoes. So the ex-agent had been seldom, if ever, seen at the Hollingsford tea-parties. He might have had his form of refusal stereotyped, it was so invariably the same.

"Mr. Sheepshanks' duty to Miss Browning and her sister" (to Mrs. Goodenough, or to others, as the case might be). "Business of import-

ance prevents him from availing himself of their polite invitation ; for which he begs to return his best thanks."

But now that Mr. Preston had succeeded, and come to live in Hollingford, things were changed.

He accepted every civility right and left, and won golden opinions accordingly. Parties were made in his honour, "just as if he had been a bride," Miss Phœbe Browning said ; and to all of them he went.

"What's the man after?" said Mr. Sheepshanks to himself, when he heard of his successor's affability, and sociability, and amiability, and a variety of other agreeable "ilities," from the friends whom the old steward still retained at Hollingford.

"Preston's not a man to put himself out for nothing. He's deep. He'll be after something solider than popularity."

The sagacious old bachelor was right. Mr. Preston was "after" something more than mere popularity. He went wherever he had a chance of meeting Cynthia Kirkpatrick.

It might be that Molly's spirits were more depressed at this time than they were in general ; or that Cynthia was exultant, unawares to herself, in the amount of attention and admiration she was receiving from Roger by day, from Mr. Preston in the evening, but the two girls seemed to have parted company in cheerfulness. Molly was always gentle, but very grave and silent. Cynthia, on the contrary, was merry, full of pretty mockeries, and hardly ever silent. When first she came to Hollingford one of her great charms had been that she was such a gracious listener ; now her excitement, by whatever caused, made her too restless to hold her tongue ; yet what she said was too pretty, too witty, not to be a winning and sparkling interruption, eagerly welcomed by those who were under her sway. Mr. Gibson was the only one who observed this change, and reasoned upon it.

"She is in a mental fever of some kind," thought he to himself. "She is very fascinating, but I don't quite understand her." If Molly had not been so entirely loyal to her friend, she might have thought this constant brilliancy a little tiresome when brought into every-day life ; it was not the sunshiny rest of a placid lake, it was rather the glitter of the pieces of a broken mirror, which confuses and bewilders. Cynthia would not talk quietly about anything now ; subjects of thought or conversation seemed to have lost their relative value. There were exceptions to this mood of hers, when she sank into deep fits of silence, that would have been gloomy had it not been for the never varying sweetness of her temper. If there was a little kindness to be done to either Mr. Gibson or Molly, Cynthia was just as ready as ever to do it ; nor did she refuse to do anything her mother wished, however fidgety might be the humour that prompted the wish. But in this latter case Cynthia's eyes were not quickened by her heart.

Molly was dejected, she knew not why. Cynthia had drifted a little apart ; that was not it. Her stepmother had whimsical moods ; and if

Cynthia displeased her, she would oppress Molly with small kindnesses and pseudo-affection. Or else everything was wrong, the world was out of joint, and Molly had failed in her mission to set it right, and was to be blamed accordingly. But Molly was of too steady a disposition to be much moved by the changeableness of an unreasonable person. She might be annoyed, or irritated, but she was not depressed. That was not it. The real cause was certainly this. As long as Roger was drawn to Cynthia, and sought her of his own accord, it had been a sore pain and bewilderment to Molly's heart; but it was a straightforward attraction, and one which Molly acknowledged, in her humility and great power of loving, to be the most natural thing in the world. She would look at Cynthia's beauty and grace, and feel as if no one could resist it. And when she witnessed all the small signs of honest devotion which Roger was at no pains to conceal, she thought, with a sigh, that surely no girl could help relinquishing her heart to such tender, strong keeping as Roger's character ensured. She would have been willing to cut off her right hand, if need were, to forward his attachment to Cynthia; and the self-sacrifice would have added a strange zest to a happy crisis. She was indignant at what she considered to be Mrs. Gibson's obtuseness to so much goodness and worth; and when she called Roger "a country lout," or any other depreciative epithet, Molly would pinch herself in order to keep silent. But after all those were peaceful days compared to the present, when she, seeing the wrong side of the tapestry, after the wont of those who dwell in the same house with a plotter, became aware that Mrs. Gibson had totally changed her behaviour to Roger, from some cause unknown to Molly.

But he was always exactly the same; "steady as old Time," as Mrs. Gibson called him, with her usual originality; "a rock of strength, under whose very shadow there is rest," as Mrs. Hamley had once spoken of him. So the cause of Mrs. Gibson's altered manner lay not in him. Yet now he was sure of a welcome, let him come at any hour he would. He was playfully reprov'd for having taken Mrs. Gibson's words too literally, and for never coming before lunch. But he said he considered her reasons for such words to be valid, and should respect them. And this was done out of his simplicity, and from no tinge of malice. Then in their family conversations at home, Mrs. Gibson was constantly making projects for throwing Roger and Cynthia together, with so evident a betrayal of her wish to bring about an engagement, that Molly chafed at the net spread so evidently, and at Roger's blindness in coming so willingly to be entrapped. She forgot his previous willingness, his former evidences of manly fondness for the beautiful Cynthia; she only saw plots of which he was the victim, and Cynthia the conscious if passive bait. She felt as if she could not have acted as Cynthia did; no, not even to gain Roger's love. Cynthia heard and saw as much of the domestic background as she did, and yet she submitted to the rôle assigned to her! To be sure, this rôle would have been played by her unconsciously; the things prescribed were what she would naturally have done; but because they were

prescribed—by implication only, it is true—Molly would have resisted; have gone out, for instance, when she was expected to stay at home; or have lingered in the garden when a long country walk was planned. At last—for she could not help loving Cynthia, come what would—she determined to believe that Cynthia was entirely unaware of all; but it was with an effort that she brought herself to believe it.

It may be all very pleasant “to sport with Amaryllis in the shade, or with the tangles of Næra’s hair,” but young men at the outset of their independent life have many other cares in this prosaic England to occupy their time and their thoughts. Roger was Fellow of Trinity, to be sure; and from the outside it certainly appeared as if his position, as long as he chose to keep unmarried, was a very easy one. His was not a nature, however, to sink down into inglorious ease, even had his fellowship income been at his disposal. He looked forward to an active life; in what direction he had not yet determined. He knew what were his talents and his tastes; and did not wish the former to lie buried, nor the latter, which he regarded as gifts, fitting him for some peculiar work, to be disregarded or thwarted. He rather liked awaiting an object, secure in his own energy to force his way to it, when he once saw it clearly. He reserved enough of money for his own personal needs, which were small, and for the ready furtherance of any project he might see fit to undertake; the rest of his income was Osborne’s; given and accepted in the spirit which made the bond between these two brothers so rarely perfect. It was only the thought of Cynthia that threw Roger off his balance. A strong man in everything else, about her he was as a child. He knew that he could not marry and retain his fellowship; his intention was to hold himself loose from any employment or profession until he had found one to his mind, so there was no immediate prospect—no prospect for many years, indeed, that he would be able to marry. Yet he went on seeking Cynthia’s sweet company, listening to the music of her voice, basking in her sunshine, and feeding his passion in every possible way, just like an unreasoning child. He knew that it was folly—and yet he did it; and it was perhaps this that made him so sympathetic with Osborne. Roger racked his brains about Osborne’s affairs much more frequently than Osborne troubled himself. Indeed, he had become so ailing and languid of late, that even the squire made only very faint objections to his desire for frequent change of scene, though formerly he used to grumble so much at the necessary expenditure it involved.

“After all, it does not cost much,” the squire said to Roger one day. “Choose how he does it, he does it cheaply; he used to come and ask me for twenty, where now he does it for five. But he and I have lost each other’s language, that’s what we have! and my dictionary” (only he called it “dixonary”) “has all got wrong because of those confounded debts—which he will never explain to me, or talk about—he always holds me off at arms’ length when I begin upon it—he does, Roger—me, his old dad, as was his primest favourite of all, when he was a little bit of a chap!”

The squire dwelt so much upon Osborne's reserved behaviour to himself, that brooding over this one subject perpetually he became more morose and gloomy than ever in his manner to Osborne, resenting the want of the confidence and affection that he thus repelled. So much so that Roger, who desired to avoid being made the receptacle of his father's complaints against Osborne—and Roger's passive listening was the sedative his father always sought—had often to have recourse to the discussion of the drainage works as a counter-irritant. The squire had felt Mr. Preston's speech about the dismissal of his workpeople very keenly; it fell in with the reproaches of his own conscience, though, as he would repeat to Roger over and over again,—"I could not help it—how could I?—I was drained dry of ready money—I wish the land was drained as dry as I am," said he, with a touch of humour that came out before he was aware, and at which he smiled sadly enough. "What was I to do, I ask you, Roger? I know I was in a rage—I've had a deal to make me so—and maybe I did not think as much about consequences as I should have done, when I gave orders for 'em to be sent off; but I could not have done otherwise if I'd ha' thought for a twelvemonth in cool blood. Consequences! I hate consequences; they've always been against me; they have. I'm so tied up I can't cut down a stick more, and that's a 'consequence' of having the property so deucedly well settled; I wish I'd never had any ancestors. Ay, laugh, lad! it does me good to see thee laugh a bit, after Osborne's long face, which always grows longer at sight o' me!"

"Look here, father!" said Roger, suddenly, "I'll manage somehow about the money for the works. You trust to me; give me two months to turn myself in, and you shall have some money, at any rate, to begin with."

The squire looked at him, and his face brightened as a child's does at the promise of a pleasure made to him by some one on whom he can rely. He became a little graver, however, as he said,—"But how will you get it? It's hard enough work."

"Never mind; I'll get it—a hundred or so at first—I don't yet know how—but remember, father, I'm a Senior Wrangler, and a 'very promising young writer,' as that review called me. Oh, you don't know what a fine fellow you've got for a son. You should have read that review to know all my wonderful merits."

"I did, Roger. I heard Gibson speaking of it, and I made him get it for me. I should have understood it better if they could have called the animals by their English names, and not put so much of their French lingo into it."

"But it was an answer to an article by a French writer," pleaded Roger.

"I'd ha' let him alone!" said the squire, earnestly. "We had to beat 'em, and we did it at Waterloo; but I'd not demean myself by answering any of their lies, if I was you. But I got through the review, for all their Latin and French; I did, and if you doubt me, you just look at the

end of the great ledger, turn it upside down, and you'll find I've copied out all the fine words they said of you : ' careful observer,' ' strong nervous English,' ' rising philosopher.' Oh! I can nearly say it all off by heart, for many a time when I am frabbed by bad debts, or Osborne's bills, or moidered with accounts, I turn the ledger wrong way up, and smoke a pipe over it, while I read those pieces out of the review which speak about you, lad ! "

CHAPTER XXXII.

COMING EVENTS.

ROGER had turned over many plans in his mind, by which he thought that he could obtain sufficient money for the purpose he desired to accomplish. His careful grandfather, who had been a merchant in the city, had so tied up the few thousands he had left to his daughter, that although, in case of her death before her husband's, the latter might enjoy the life interest thereof, yet in case of both their deaths, their second son did not succeed to the property until he was five-and-twenty; and if he died before that age the money that would then have been his went to one of his cousins on the maternal side. In short, the old merchant had taken as many precautions about his legacy as if it had been for tens, instead of units of thousands. Of course Roger might have slipped through all these meshes by insuring his life until the specified age; and probably if he had consulted any lawyer this course would have been suggested to him. But he disliked taking any one into his confidence on the subject of his father's want of ready money. He had obtained a copy of his grandfather's will at Doctors' Commons, and he imagined that all the contingencies involved in it would be patent to the light of nature and common sense. He was a little mistaken in this, but not the less resolved that money in some way he would have in order to fulfil his promise to his father, and for the ulterior purpose of giving the squire some daily interest to distract his thoughts from the regrets and cares that were almost weakening his mind. It was " Roger Hamley, Senior Wrangler and Fellow of Trinity, to the highest bidder, no matter what honest employment," and presently it came down to " any bidder at all."

Another perplexity and distress at this time weighed upon Roger. Osborne, heir to the estate, was going to have a child. The Hamley property was entailed on " heirs male born in lawful wedlock." Was the " wedlock " lawful? Osborne never seemed to doubt that it was—never seemed, in fact, to think twice about it. And if he, the husband, did not, how much less did Aimée, the trustful wife? Yet who could tell how much misery any shadows of illegality might cast into the future? One evening Roger, sitting by the languid, careless, dilettante Osborne, began to question him as to the details of the marriage. Osborne knew instinctively at what Roger was aiming. It was not that he did not desire perfect

legality in justice to his wife; it was that he was so indisposed at the time that he hated to be bothered. It was something like the refrain of Gray's Scandinavian Prophetess: "Leave me, leave me to repose."

"But do try and tell me how you managed it."

"How tiresome you are, Roger," put in Osborne.

"Well, I dare say I am. Go on!"

"I've told you Morrison married us. You remember old Morrison at Trinity?"

"Yes; as good and blunder-headed a fellow as ever lived."

"Well, he's taken orders; and the examination for priest's orders fatigued him so much that he got his father to give him a hundred or two for a tour on the Continent. He meant to get to Rome, because he heard that there were such pleasant winters there. So he turned up at Metz in August."

"I don't see why."

"No more did he. He never was great in geography, you know; and somehow he thought that Metz, pronounced French fashion, must be on the road to Rome. Some one had told him so in fun. However, it was very well for me that I met with him there for I was determined to be married, and that without loss of time."

"But Aimée is a Catholic?"

"That's true! but you see I am not. You don't suppose I would do her any wrong, Roger?" asked Osborne, sitting up in his lounging-chair, and speaking rather indignantly to Roger, his face suddenly flushing red.

"No! I'm sure you would not mean it; but you see there's a child coming, and this estate is entailed on 'heirs male.' Now, I want to know if the marriage is legal or not? and it seems to me it's a ticklish question."

"Oh!" said Osborne, falling back into repose, "if that's all, I suppose you're next heir male, and I can trust you as I can myself. You know my marriage is *bonâ fide* in intention, and I believe it to be legal in fact. We went over to Strasbourg; Aimée picked up a friend—a good middle-aged Frenchwoman—who served half as bridesmaid, half as chaperone, and then we went before the mayor—*préfet*—what do you call them? I think Morrison rather enjoyed the spree. I signed all manner of papers in the prefecture; I did not read them over, for fear lest I could not sign them conscientiously. It was the safest plan. Aimée kept trembling so I thought she would faint, and then we went off to the nearest English chaplaincy, Carlsruhe, and the chaplain was away, so Morrison easily got the loan of the chapel, and we were married the next day."

"But surely some registration or certificate was necessary?"

"Morrison said he would undertake all those forms; and he ought to know his own business. I know I tipped him pretty well for the job."

"You must be married again," said Roger, after a pause, "and that before the child is born. Have you got a certificate of the marriage?"

"I dare say Morrison has got it somewhere. But I believe I'm legally

married according to the laws both of England and France; I really do, old fellow. I've got the préfet's papers somewhere."

"Never mind! you shall be married again in England. Aimée goes to the Roman Catholic chapel at Prestham, does not she?"

"Yes. She is so good I would not disturb her in her religion for the world."

"Then you shall be married both there and at the church of the parish in which she lives as well," said Roger, decidedly.

"It's a great deal of trouble, unnecessary trouble, and unnecessary expense, I should say," said Osborne. "Why can't you leave well alone? Neither Aimée nor I are of the sort of stuff to turn scoundrels and deny the legality of our marriage, and if the child is a boy and my father dies, and I die, why I'm sure you'll do him justice, as sure as I am of myself, old fellow!"

"But if I die into the bargain? Make a hecatomb of the present Hamleys all at once, while you are about it. Who succeeds as heir male?"

Osborne thought for a moment. "One of the Irish Hamleys, I suppose. I fancy they are needy chaps. Perhaps you're right. But what need to have such gloomy forebodings?"

"The law makes one have foresight in such affairs," said Roger. "So I'll go down to Aimée next week when I'm in town, and I'll make all necessary arrangements before you come. I think you'll be happier if it is all done."

"I shall be happier if I've a chance of seeing the little woman, that I grant you. But what is taking you up to town? I wish I'd money to run about like you, instead of being shut up for ever in this dull old house."

Osborne was apt occasionally to contrast his position with Roger's in a tone of complaint, forgetting that both were the results of character, and also that out of his income Roger gave up so large a portion for the maintenance of his brother's wife. But if this ungenerous thought of Osborne's had been set clearly before his conscience, he would have smote his breast and cried "*Mea culpa*" with the best of them; it was only that he was too indolent to keep an unassisted conscience.

"I should not have thought of going up," said Roger, reddening as if he had been accused of spending another's money instead of his own, "if I had not had to go up on business. Lord Hollingford has written for me; he knows my great wish for employment, and has heard of something which he considers suitable; there's his letter if you care to read it. But it does not tell anything definitely."

Osborne read the letter and returned it to Roger. After a moment or two of silence he said,—“Why do you want money? Are we taking too much from you? It's a great shame of me; but what can I do? Only suggest a career for me, and I'll follow it to-morrow.” He spoke as if Roger had been reproaching him.

"My dear fellow, don't get those notions into your head! I must do something for myself sometimes, and I have been on the look-out. Besides, I want my father to go on with his drainage, it would do good both to his health and his spirits. If I can advance any part of the money requisite, he and you shall pay me interest until you can return the capital."

"Roger, you're the providence of the family," exclaimed Osborne, suddenly struck by admiration at his brother's conduct, and forgetting to contrast it with his own.

So Roger went up to London and Osborne followed him, and for two or three weeks the Gibsons saw nothing of the brothers. But as wave succeeds to wave, so interest succeeds to interest. "The family," as they were called, came down for their autumn sojourn at the Towers; and again the house was full of visitors, and the Towers' servants, and carriages, and liveries were seen in the two streets of Hollingford, just as they might have been seen for scores of autumns past.

So runs the round of life from day to day. Mrs. Gibson found the chances of intercourse with the Towers rather more personally exciting than Roger's visits, or the rarer calls of Osborne Hamley. Cynthia had an old antipathy to the great family who had made so much of her mother and so little of her; and whom she considered as in some measure the cause why she had seen so little of her mother in the days when the little girl had craved for love and found none. Moreover, Cynthia missed her slave, although she did not care for Roger one thousandth part of what he did for her; yet she had found it not unpleasant to have a man whom she thoroughly respected, and whom men in general respected, the subject of her eye, the glad ministrant to each scarce spoken wish, a person in whose sight all her words were pearls or diamonds, all her actions heavenly graciousness, and in whose thoughts she reigned supreme. She had no modest unconsciousness about her; and yet she was not vain. She knew of all this worship; and when from circumstances she no longer received it she missed it. The Earl and the Countess, Lord Hollingford and Lady Harriet, lords and ladies in general, liveries, dresses, bags of game, and rumours of riding parties were as nothing to her as compared to Roger's absence. And yet she did not love him. No, she did not love him. Molly knew that Cynthia did not love him. Molly grew angry with her many and many a time as the conviction of this fact was forced upon her. Molly did not know her own feelings; Roger had no overwhelming interest in what they might be; while his very life-breath seemed to depend on what Cynthia felt and thought. Therefore Molly had keen insight into her "sister's" heart; and she knew that Cynthia did not love Roger. Molly could have cried with passionate regret at the thought of the unvalued treasure lying at Cynthia's feet; and it would have been a merely unselfish regret. It was the old fervid tenderness. "Do not wish for the moon, O my darling, for I cannot give it thee." Cynthia's love was the moon Roger yearned for;

and Molly saw that it was far away and out of reach, else would she have strained her heart-strings to give it to Roger.

"I am his sister," she would say to herself. "That old bond is not done away with, though he is too much absorbed by Cynthia to speak about it just now. His mother called me 'Fanny;' it was almost like an adoption. I must wait and watch, and see if I can do anything for my brother."

One day Lady Harriet came to call on the Gibsons, or rather on Mrs. Gibson, for the latter retained her old jealousy if any one else in Hollingford was supposed to be on intimate terms at the great house, or in the least acquainted with their plans. Mr. Gibson might possibly know as much, but then he was professionally bound to secrecy. Out of the house she considered Mr. Preston as her rival, and he was aware that she did so, and delighted in teasing her by affecting a knowledge of family plans and details of affairs of which she was not aware. Indoors she was jealous of the fancy Lady Harriet had evidently taken for her stepdaughter, and she contrived to place quiet obstacles in the way of a too frequent intercourse between the two. These obstacles were not unlike the shield of the knight in the old story; only instead of the two sides presented to the two travellers approaching it from opposite quarters, one of which was silver, and one of which was gold, Lady Harriet saw the smooth and shining yellow radiance, while poor Molly only perceived a dull and heavy lead. To Lady Harriet it was "Molly is gone out; she will be so sorry to miss you, but she was obliged to go to see some old friends of her mother's whom she ought not to neglect: as I said to her, constancy is everything. It is Sterne, I think, who says, 'Thine own and thy mother's friends forsake not.' But, dear Lady Harriet, you'll stop till she comes home, won't you? I know how fond you are of her; in fact" (with a little surface playfulness) "I sometimes say you come more to see her than your poor old Clare."

To Molly it had previously been,—

"Lady Harriet is coming here this morning. I can't have any one else coming in. Tell Maria to say I'm not at home. Lady Harriet has always so much to tell me. Dear Lady Harriet! I've known all her secrets since she was twelve years old. You two girls must keep out of the way. Of course she'll ask for you, out of common civility; but you would only interrupt us if you came in, as you did the other day;"—now addressing Molly—"I hardly like to say so, but I thought it was very forward."

"Maria told me she had asked for me," put in Molly, simply.

"Very forward indeed!" continued Mrs. Gibson, taking no further notice of the interruption, except to strengthen the words to which Molly's little speech had been intended as a correction.

"I think this time I must secure her ladyship from the chances of such an intrusion, by taking care that you are out of the house, Molly. You had better go to the Holly Farm, and speak about those damsons I ordered, and which have never been sent."

"I'll go," said Cynthia. "It's far too long a walk for Molly; she's had a bad cold, and is not as strong as she was a fortnight ago. I delight in long walks. If you want Molly out of the way, mamma, send her to the Miss Brownings—they are always glad to see her."

"I never said I wanted Molly out of the way, Cynthia," replied Mrs. Gibson. "You always put things in such an exaggerated—I should almost say, so coarse a manner. I am sure, Molly, my love, you could never have so misunderstood me; it is only on Lady Harriet's account."

"I don't think I can walk as far as the Holly Farm; papa would take the message; Cynthia need not go."

"Well! I'm the last person in the world to tax any one's strength; I'd sooner never see damson preserve again. Suppose you do go and see Miss Browning; you can pay her a nice long call—you know she likes that—and ask after Miss Phœbe's cold from me, you know. They were friends of your mother's, my dear, and I would not have you break off old friendships for the world. 'Constancy above everything' is my motto, as you know, and the memory of the dead ought always to be cherished."

"Now, mamma, where am I to go?" asked Cynthia. "Though Lady Harriet does not care for me as much as she does for Molly—indeed, quite the contrary I should say—yet she might ask after me, and I had better be safely out of the way."

"True!" said Mrs. Gibson, meditatively, yet unconscious of any satire in Cynthia's speech.

"She is much less likely to ask for you, my dear: I almost think you might remain in the house, or you might go to the Holly Farm; I really do want the damsons; or you might stay here in the dining-room, you know, so as to be ready to arrange lunch prettily, if she does take a fancy to stay for it. She is very fanciful, is dear Lady Harriet! I would not like her to think we made any difference in our meals because she stayed. 'Simple elegance,' as I tell her, 'always is what we aim at.' But still you could put out the best service, and arrange some flowers, and ask cook what there is for dinner that she could send us for lunch, and make it all look pretty, and impromptu, and natural. I think you had better stay at home, Cynthia, and then you could fetch Molly from Miss Browning's in the afternoon, you know, and you two could take a walk together."

"After Lady Harriet was fairly gone! I understand, mamma. Off with you, Molly. Make haste, or Lady Harriet may come and ask for you as well as mamma. I'll take care and forget where you are going to, so that no one shall learn from me where you are, and I'll answer for mamma's loss of memory."

"Child! what nonsense you talk; you quite confuse me with being so silly," said Mrs. Gibson, fluttered and annoyed as she usually was with the Lilliputian darts Cynthia flung at her. She had recourse to her accustomed feckless piece of retaliation—bestowing some favour on Molly; and this did not hurt Cynthia one whit.

"Molly, darling, there's a very cold wind, though it looks so fine. You had better put on my Indian shawl; and it will look so pretty, too, on your grey gown—scarlet and grey—it's not everybody I would lend it to, but you're so careful."

"Thank you," said Molly: and she left Mrs. Gibson in careless uncertainty as to whether her offer would be accepted or not.

Lady Harriet was sorry to miss Molly, as she was fond of the girl; but as she perfectly agreed with Mrs. Gibson's truism about "constancy" and "old friends," she saw no occasion for saying any more about the affair, but sat down in a little low chair with her feet on the fender. This said fender was made of bright bright steel, and was strictly tabooed to all household and plebeian feet; indeed the position, if they assumed it, was considered low-bred and vulgar.

"That's right, dear Lady Harriet! you can't think what a pleasure it is to me to welcome you at my own fireside, into my humble home."

"Humble! now, Clare, that's a little bit of nonsense, begging your pardon. I don't call this pretty little drawing-room a bit of a 'humble home.' It is as full of comforts, and of pretty things too, as any room of its size can be."

"Ah! how small you must feel it! even I had to reconcile myself to it at first."

"Well! perhaps your school-room was larger, but remember how bare it was, how empty of anything but deal tables, and forms, and mats. Oh, indeed, Clare, I quite agree with mamma, who always says you have done very well for yourself; and Mr. Gibson too! What an agreeable, well-informed man!"

"Yes, he is," said his wife, slowly, as if she did not like to relinquish her rôle of a victim to circumstances quite immediately. "He is very agreeable, very; only we see so little of him; and of course he comes home tired and hungry, and not inclined to talk to his own family, and apt to go to sleep."

"Come, come!" said Lady Harriet, "I'm going to have my turn now. We've had the complaint of a doctor's wife, now hear the moans of a peer's daughter. Our house is so overrun with visitors; and literally to-day I have come to you for a little solitude."

"Solitude!" exclaimed Mrs. Gibson. "Would you rather be alone?" slightly aggrieved.

"No, you dear silly woman; my solitude requires a listener, to whom I may say, 'How sweet is solitude.' But I am tired of the responsibility of entertaining. Papa is so open-hearted, he asks every friend he meets with to come and pay us a visit. Mamma is really a great invalid, but she does not choose to give up her reputation for good health, having always considered illness a want of self-control. So she gets wearied and worried by a crowd of people who are all of them open-mouthed for amusement of some kind; just like a brood of fledglings in a nest; so I have to be parent-bird, and pop morsels into their yellow

leathery bills, to find them swallowed down before I can think of where to find the next. Oh, it's 'entertaining' in the largest, literalest, dreariest sense of the word. So I have told a few lies this morning, and come off here for quietness and the comfort of complaining!"

Lady Harriet threw herself back in her chair, and yawned; Mrs. Gibson took one of her ladyship's hands in a soft sympathizing manner, and murmured, "Poor Lady Harriet!" and then she purred affectionately.

After a pause Lady Harriet started up and said—"I used to take you as my arbiter of morals when I was a little girl. Tell me, do you think it wrong to tell lies?"

"Oh, my dear! how can you ask such questions?—of course it is very wrong,—very wicked indeed, I think I may say. But I know you were only joking when you said you had told lies."

"No, indeed, I was not. I told as plump fat lies as you would wish to hear. I said I 'was obliged to go into Hollingford on business,' when the truth was there was no obligation in the matter, only an insupportable desire of being free from my visitors for an hour or two, and my only business was to come here, and yawn, and complain, and lounge at my leisure. I really think I'm unhappy at having told a story, as children express it."

"But, my dear Lady Harriet," said Mrs. Gibson, a little puzzled as to the exact meaning of the words that were trembling on her tongue, "I am sure you thought that you meant what you said, when you said it."

"No, I didn't," put in Lady Harriet.

"And besides, if you didn't, it was the fault of the tiresome people who drove you into such straits—yes, it was certainly their fault, not yours—and then you know the conventions of society—ah, what trammels they are!"

Lady Harriet was silent for a minute or two; then she said,—"Tell me, Clare; you've told lies sometimes, haven't you?"

"Lady Harriet! I think you might have known me better; but I know you don't mean it, dear."

"Yes, I do. You must have told white lies, at any rate. How did you feel after them?"

"I should have been miserable if I ever had. I should have died of self-reproach. 'The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' has always seemed to me such a fine passage. But then I have so much that is unbending in my nature, and in our sphere of life there are so few temptations. If we are humble, we are also simple, and unshackled by etiquette."

"Then you blame me very much? If somebody else will blame me, I shan't be so unhappy at what I said this morning."

"I am sure I never blamed you, not in my innermost heart, dear Lady Harriet. Blame you, indeed! That would be presumption in me."

"I think I shall set up a confessor! and it shan't be you, Clare, for you have always been only too indulgent to me."

After a pause she said,—“Can you give me some lunch, Clare? I don't mean to go home till three. My ‘business’ will take me till then, as the people at the Towers are duly informed.”

“Certainly. I shall be delighted! but you know we are very simple in our habits.”

“Oh, I only want a little bread and butter, and perhaps a slice of cold meat—you must not give yourself any trouble, Clare—perhaps you dine now? let me sit down just like one of your family.”

“Yes, you shall; I won't make any alteration;—it will be so pleasant to have you sharing our family meal, dear Lady Harriet. But we dine late, we only lunch now. How low the fire is getting; I really am forgetting everything in the pleasure of this tête-à-tête!”

So she rang twice; with great distinctness, and with a long pause between the rings. Maria brought in coals.

But the signal was as well understood by Cynthia as the “Hall of Apollo” was by the servants of Lucullus. The brace of partridges that were to have been for the late dinner were instantly put down to the fire; and the prettiest china put out, and the table decked with flowers and fruit, arranged with all Cynthia's usual dexterity and taste. So that when the meal was announced, and Lady Harriet entered the room, she could not but think her hostess's apologies had been quite unnecessary; and be more and more convinced that Clare had done very well for herself. Cynthia now joined the party, pretty and elegant as she always was; but somehow she did not take Lady Harriet's fancy; she only noticed her on account of her being her mother's daughter. Her presence made the conversation more general, and Lady Harriet gave out several pieces of news, none of them of any great importance to her, but as what had been talked about by the circle of visitors assembled at the Towers.

“Lord Hollingsford ought to have been with us,” she said, amongst other things; “but he is obliged, or fancies himself obliged, which is all the same thing, to stay in town about this Crichton legacy!”

“A legacy? To Lord Hollingsford? I am so glad!”

“Don't be in a hurry to be glad! It's nothing for him but trouble. Did not you hear of that rich eccentric Mr. Crichton, who died some time ago, and—fired by the example of Lord Bridgewater, I suppose—left a sum of money in the hands of trustees, of whom my brother is one, to send out a man with a thousand fine qualifications, to make a scientific voyage, with a view to bringing back specimens of the fauna of distant lands, and so forming the nucleus of a museum which is to be called the Crichton Museum, and so perpetuate the founder's name. Such various forms does man's vanity take! Sometimes it simulates philanthropy; sometimes a love of science!”

“It seems to me a very laudable and useful object, I am sure,” said Mrs. Gibson, safely.

“I daresay it is, taking it from the public-good view. But it is rather tiresome to us privately, for it keeps Hollingsford in town—or between it

and Cambridge—and each place as dull and empty as can be, just when we want him down at the Towers. The thing ought to have been decided long ago, and there's some danger of the legacy lapsing. The two other trustees have run away to the Continent, feeling, as they say, the utmost confidence in him, but in reality shirking their responsibilities. However, I believe he likes it, so I ought not to grumble. He thinks he is going to be very successful in the choice of his man—and he belongs to this county, too,—young Hamley of Hamley, if he can only get his college to let him go, for he's a Fellow of Trinity, Senior Wrangler or something; and they're not so foolish as to send their crack man to be eaten up by lions and tigers!"

"It must be Roger Hamley!" exclaimed Cynthia, her eyes brightening, and her cheeks flushing.

"He's not the eldest son; he can scarcely be called Hamley of Hamley!" said Mrs. Gibson.

"Hollingford's man is a Fellow of Trinity, as I said before."

"Then it is Mr. Roger Hamley," said Cynthia; "and he's up in London about some business! What news for Molly when she comes home!"

"Why, what has Molly to do with it?" asked Lady Harriet. "Is—?" and she looked into Mrs. Gibson's face for an answer. Mrs. Gibson in reply gave an intelligent and very expressive glance at Cynthia, who however did not perceive it.

"Oh, no! not at all"—and Mrs. Gibson nodded a little at her daughter, as much as to say, "If any one, that."

Lady Harriet began to look at the pretty Miss Kirkpatrick with fresh interest; her brother had spoken in such a manner of this young Mr. Hamley that every one connected with the Phoenix was worthy of observation. Then, as if the mention of Molly's name had brought her afresh into her mind, Lady Harriet said,—“And where is Molly all this time? I should like to see my little mentor. I hear she is very much grown since those days.”

"Oh! when she once gets gossiping with the Miss Brownings, she never knows when to come home," said Mrs. Gibson.

"The Miss Brownings? Oh! I am so glad you named them! I am very fond of them. Pecksy and Flapsy; I may call them so in Molly's absence. I'll go and see them before I go home, and then perhaps I shall see my dear little Molly too. Do you know, Clare, I have quite taken a fancy to that girl!"

So Mrs. Gibson, after all her precautions, had to submit to Lady Harriet's leaving her half-an-hour earlier than she otherwise would have done in order to "make herself common" (as Mrs. Gibson expressed it) by calling on the Miss Brownings.

But Molly had left before Lady Harriet arrived.

Molly went the long walk to the Holly Farm to order the damsons out of a kind of penitence. She had felt conscious of anger at being sent out of the house by such a palpable manœuvre as that which her step-

mother had employed. Of course she did not meet Cynthia, so she went alone along the pretty lanes, with grassy sides and high hedge-banks not at all in the style of modern agriculture. At first she made herself uncomfortable with questioning herself as to how far it was right to leave unnoticed the small domestic failings—the webs, the distortions of truth which had prevailed in their household ever since her father's second marriage. She knew that very often she longed to protest, but did not do it, from the desire of sparing her father any discord; and she saw by his face that he, too, was occasionally aware of certain things that gave him pain, as showing that his wife's standard of conduct was not as high as he would have liked. It was a wonder to Molly if this silence was right or wrong. With a girl's want of toleration, and want of experience to teach her the force of circumstances, and of temptation, she had often been on the point of telling her stepmother some forcible home truths. But possibly her father's example of silence, and often some piece of kindness on Mrs. Gibson's part (for after her way, and when in a good temper, she was very kind to Molly), made her hold her tongue.

That night at dinner Mrs. Gibson recounted the conversation between herself and Lady Harriet, giving it a very strong individual colouring, as was her wont, and telling nearly the whole of what had passed, although implying that there was a great deal said that was so purely confidential, that she was bound in honour not to repeat it. Her three auditors listened to her without interrupting her much—indeed, without bestowing extreme attention on what she was saying, until she came to the fact of Lord Hollingsford's absence in London, and the reason for it.

"Roger Hamley going off on a scientific expedition!" exclaimed Mr. Gibson, suddenly awakened into vivacity.

"Yes. At least it is not settled finally; but as Lord Hollingsford is the only trustee who takes any interest—and being Lord Cumnor's son—it is next to certain."

"I think I must have a voice in the matter," said Mr. Gibson; and he relapsed into silence, keeping his ears open, however, henceforward.

"How long will he be away?" asked Cynthia. "We shall miss him sadly."

Molly's lips formed an acquiescing yes to this remark, but no sound was heard. There was a buzzing in her ears as if the others were going on with the conversation, but the words they uttered seemed indistinct and blurred; they were merely conjectures, and did not interfere with the one great piece of news. To the rest of the party she appeared to be eating her dinner as usual, and, if she were silent, there was one listener the more to Mrs. Gibson's stream of prattle, and Mr. Gibson's and Cynthia's remarks.

The English Drama during the Reigns of Elizabeth and James.

PART II.

IN some respects the comic drama is less important than the higher sphere of tragedy, although from it we gain a better knowledge of the customs and opinions of society. The peculiar fashions, follies, and fancies of an age are seen best in its comedies. In England, during the reigns of Elizabeth and James, two distinct kinds of comic composition prevailed. These may be called the Comedy of the Imagination and the Comedy of Manners. In point of art, the former was the highest, and in this department Shakspeare reigned supreme. To call the *Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *As You Like It*, and *Much Ado about Nothing*, by the same name as that which we ascribe to the plays of Aristophanes, Molière, and Sheridan, is a mistake in literature. No theatre in any other age has produced works of such pure creative fancy. They carry us into the very realm of the ideal, representing men and women purged from human weakness, whose vices we do not censure so harshly as those of real life, and whose actions have a grace and charm beyond that of this world. Shakspeare probably derived his style of comedy from the masques and shows which were so much in vogue, and which adhered but slightly to the incidents of human life. How he meant them to be interpreted may be gathered from the fanciful introduction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, from the name of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, from the magic of Prospero, and from the woodland solitudes of *As You Like It*. He expressly avoids in these creations the ordinary paths of men. No one followed Shakspeare closely in this sphere of Art, though Beaumont and Fletcher certainly were authors of imaginative comedy. These dramatists borrowed greatly from Spanish sources, and the cast of their genius was so light and graceful that it gave a charm to everything they touched. The remote scenes in which they placed the action of their plays, and the fluency of thought, fertility of invention, and exquisite poetic ease with which they wrought and carried out their plots, raise their comedies far above the common level, and give them the right to rank with Shakspeare's. For the forms of Art and for fidelity to fact Beaumont and Fletcher cared but little. They sought for striking situations, unexpected catastrophes, and occasions for displaying their command of dialogue. They were too rapid in execution to attend to details; and their plays, in consequence, are often ill-compacted, languid in development, and hurried in conclusion. But they knew the secret of

exciting interest by inexhaustible combinations of novel effects, depending more upon variety of incident than upon analysis of character. Mere spontaneity of genius and an unwearied flow of animal spirits seem to have been the source of their success. Poetry overflows their pages, appearing in and out of season like the improvisations of a clever and exhilarated musician, who does not care to dwell so much upon the simple expression of pure feeling, or to assume the dignity of science, as to surprise his hearers by perpetual sallies of fresh fancy, and to charm them by the melodious beauty of mere ornament. Truth can only be found in nice gradations and in delicate analyses. And this is very certain of dramatic composition. No characters so broadly sketched and coarsely executed as those of Fletcher are like nature. They are for the most part types and symbols, exaggerated humours, or fanciful personifications of bare possibilities. We lack in them the profound effect which is produced by the deliberate exhibition of contending passions, of crime pursued with hesitation and remorse, and of virtue slowly sapped, and yielding to renewed solicitations. The characters of Beaumont and Fletcher have always taken their part upon the side of good or evil. They stick to their colours with unflinching tenacity, or abandon them with inconceivable precipitation; we look upon these men and women as the phantoms of a pantomime, as airy creatures of a reverie, who, doing right or wrong, are moved by the mere springs of fancy, and who feel no moral responsibilities like those of real life. In this respect the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher resemble Shakspeare's comedies. But while their phantasmagoric creations reveal to us only the outward show of things, and play upon the surface of human nature, Shakspeare's comedies unfold the very soul of man made magically perfect, and his imagination freed from all impediments to its aerial flight. Sir Thomas Browne has said—"We are somewhat more than ourselves in our sleep;" and these words might be applied to Shakspeare's comedies. There we move in a land of dreams, peopled by shapes greater and more beautiful than those of common life, lighted by larger suns that shine through purer air—visions reflected on the mirror of the mind which adds prismatic colours to the forms that it enlarges to a shadowy magnificence.

Very different is the Comedy of Manners. Here we gain a simple transcript of daily life in London. All the English dramatists wrote plays in this style. Most of them are very tedious now to read, and very coarse. It is hardly possible to comprehend how the ladies of the court of Elizabeth could have sat by to witness buffoonery so gross, and to hear language so obscene. Yet they must even have enjoyed them; for masques and comic interludes, which were designed especially for the queen's honour, are full of jests that clowns and coal-heavers would hiss down now in a country circus. These comedies turn for the most part upon the contrast between court and city. The pranks of fine gentlemen, and the knaveries of sharpers, supply them with incidents. They describe all the reverses of fortune to which a man is rendered liable by a profligate life. The persons whom we find in them are not unlike those of Terence and

Plantus—a jealous husband, a wilful wife, a stupid country squire, a parasite, a humorous serving-man, a supple courtier, a simple girl, a Frenchman, and a gallant. The dramatists, when engaged upon such pieces, did not aim at poetry, or subtle fancy. They sought success by introducing plenty of broad fun, ludicrous incidents, biting satire, and broadly defined characters. They threw them off very rapidly, nor did they care to preserve them for posterity. Marston in his preface to the *Faune* apologizes for its publication: "If any shall wonder why I print a comedy, whose life rests much in the actor's voice, let such know that I cannot avoid publishing." He alludes to the booksellers' practice of taking down plays by short-hand, and so presenting them to the world in a pirated and garbled state. He makes the same defence before the *Malcontent*: "Only one thing affects me: to think that scenes invented merely to be spoken, should be inforcively published to be read." So truly did "the life of these things consist in action," that long passages were often left for the extempore declamation of the actors. Sometimes the whole conduct of the piece depended on their improvisation. They were then provided with programmes of the acts and scenes, and of the exits, entrances, and characters of the persons to be represented. These programmes got the name of "Platt," from which we derive the word "plot." They were hung up on the screenwork of the stage for the performers to study and refer to. This practice seems to have been derived from Italy, where such an outline of a comedy was called "Scenario." It is difficult to understand how several actors in one company could have been found sufficiently clever to impersonate impromptu parts; how all of them managed to carry out the same conception of a plot, and how each spoke his own speech without interfering with that of his neighbour. It must, however, be remembered that acting was then studied as a profession even more than it is now. A traditional handling of these extempore pieces, a repetition of stock jests and actions, and an acquired feeling for the due proportion of different parts to one another, must have simplified their difficulty. In England they were never so common as they seem to have been in Italy and France. Yet the effect even of our written comedies must have depended in a great measure on the excellence of the actors of the day. The old customs of maintaining jesters in castles or at court, had formed a class of men whose profession it was to entertain people with their comic acting, mimicry, and sharp sayings. Continued through many centuries, the skill of these Fools had been carried to a high degree of perfection by long practice, by the handing down of traditional habits of buffoonery, and by the emulation which inspired each succeeding jester to surpass his predecessor. Thus the playwrights found a band of able actors ready to express what they had written. Such men were Tarleton, Green, Kempe, and Robert Wilson, who sometimes, beside acting other people's comedies, went so far as to embody their own jokes in little scenes and farces. In the hands of Decker and Massinger, the Comedy of Manners received a higher treatment. The

City Madam, and a *New Way to Pay Old Debts*, are among the most subtle and delicate productions of dramatic genius. Nor were the fluent plays of Middleton without their charm of easy movement and light humour. But it was from Ben Jonson that their style received its loftiest form. His comedies in their way, as truly as those of Shakspeare, are the productions of indubitable and peculiar genius. He never wrote at random. He never sought to please the populace by exhibitions of buffoonery. Nor could he succeed in riveting their attention upon the ponderous merriment of his "learned sock." Yet those who did not admire his muse he treated with contempt, and pursued his own designs, writing satires on his brother poets and scorning—

The loathed stage,
And the more loathsome age,
Where pride and impudence in faction knit,
Usurp the chair of wit.

Jonson was essentially a moralist and a philosopher, expressing through the medium of the drama the results of his inquiries into human nature. The end of poetry, in his opinion, was "to inform men in the best reason of living;" and he wrote systematically, deducing his characters from some conception of a particular attribute of strength or weakness, of vice or virtue, and building up his plots with the tremendous machinery of learning and the vast intellectual resources which he could command. Unlike the imaginative comic poets, he adhered to scenes of common life; and, deviating from the spirit of the school he had adopted, he portrayed, not the broad and general aspects of humanity, but its exaggerated and unusual eccentricities. Therefore the name of Humour, which we find so often on his lips, may be taken as the keynote to his conception of character.

Comedy was scattered up and down our great dramas. This peculiarity of the English stage may be attributed, as we shall see hereafter, to the influence of Miracle Plays, and also to the intense realism of our art. It has been most commonly objected against Shakspeare that he introduces ribald clowns and gravediggers and porters into the stately scenes of *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*; and commentators, when surveying Massinger and Fletcher, have felt sorely puzzled whether to call certain dramas tragedies or comedies or tragi-comedies, according to the preponderance of humour and pathos in their scenes. It is not a little amusing to think of critics like Seward trying to classify by rules of Aristotle plays so burdened with conflicting passions and incongruous elements. Our dramatists sought to display human life, just as they found it, with all its lights and shades, in its depth as well as in its height, nor did they fail to draw sublime and terrible effects from the juxtaposition of the pathetic and the ludicrous, of tears and laughter, of purity and coarseness, of high-souled unselfishness and grovelling sensuality, which everywhere the world presents.

Allied in character to comedy were the pastorals and masques in which our ancestors delighted. No court festivals; no rejoicings in manor-

house and castle; no civic pomps; no ceremonies at the university, were held complete without a gorgeous show of shepherds, allegories, gods and goddesses. In their partiality for these exhibitions the English shared the taste of Europe. Like all fashions of the time, masques came originally from Italy. Marlowe says—

I'll have Italian masks by night,
Sweet speeches, comedies, and pleasing shows.

The Spaniards adopted them with great splendour, and English nobles spent vast sums of money in vying with the Continental courts. How magnificent and how lengthy were these triumphs may be gathered from the picture which Scott has drawn in *Kenilworth*. The greatest architects and painters deigned to devise the machinery and decoration of the shows. Piero di Cosimo and Granacci painted the cars of Florentine revellers. Heywood speaks thus of one of his own masques: "For the rare decorations which now apparelled it, when it came the second time to the royal view, I cannot pretermit to give a due character to that admirable artist, Mr. Inigo Jones, who, to every act, nay, almost to every scene, by his excellent imitations, gave extraordinary lustre, upon every occasion changing the stage to the admiration of all beholders." The resources of our theatre were remarkably limited. It is, therefore, probable that the splendour of these shows consisted chiefly in the multitude of actors who came upon the stage, and in the variety and quaintness of their dresses. The best poets were called upon to write words for the actors. Heywood dramatized nearly all the stories you may find in Lemprière, in four long plays upon the Golden, Silver, Brass, and Iron Ages. The legend of Cupid and Psyche he embodied in another plethoric play. Sometimes the Virtues spoke. Sometimes wood-nymphs crowned Oriana. Sometimes the languages and sciences contended for pre-eminence. There was no end to the subjects of these allegories.

In order more thoroughly to understand the spirit of the English stage, we must glance at the men who wrote for it, the audience, and the theatre in which they were assembled. The patrons of the drama, we have already seen, were the people, not the court as in the case of Spain and France, nor the universities. The people had become accustomed to theatrical exhibitions through the mediæval custom of representing the chief facts of Biblical History in a dramatic form. These Miracle Plays, or Mysteries, were shown in every town, sometimes by monks within the precinct of the church, sometimes by 'prentice lads and citizens upon the market-place. Their origin was very ancient. The Italian, Spanish, French, and German nations were no less partial to them than the English. In the Tyrol we may see them acted to this day, and at Rome about the time of the Epiphany some remnants of the custom linger still in the Church of Ara Cœli. The name Mystery, which we share in common with the French, has been derived from Ministerium. The Spaniards called them Autos. But in no country did they exercise so powerful an influence upon the secular drama as in England. The Miracle Plays of Coventry, Chester,

and Widkirk Abbey have been preserved. From these we understand how they educated the imagination of the audience, and how they introduced that mixture of comic and serious subjects which became so prominent in English art. In these plays, by help of the very smallest scenic illusion, countryfolk and children from the street were shown the armies of the angels, God the Father on his throne, the patriarchs and women of old time, the life and death of Christ, the Judgment, and the terror of Hell. Their language is always familiar and grotesque. We should call it impious and profane. The three persons of the Trinity converse together. Satan appears and capers before them with knavish tricks and ribald words to make the people laugh. On one occasion the Father is represented sleeping at the moment of the crucifixion. An angel wakes him up, and asks whether he is not ashamed to doze at such a time. Herod always appeared in a great rage, with a huge nose and a boy beside him shaking rattles in his ear to goad him to the proper pitch of fury. The plan of these plays was generally vast. It began with Creation and ended with the Judgment, having traversed the whole extent of religious history. Between scenes of a graver character, comic interludes relieved the attention of the audience. For instance, in the Widkirk plays, Noah beats his wife because, after a long altercation, she refuses to enter the ark, and Joseph plays the jealous husband when he hears of Gabriel's visit to the Virgin Mary. A very ludicrous episode occurs before the scene of the Nativity, which consists of a discussion between some shepherds about a lamb which one of them has stolen. They are all called by common rustic names, and allusion is frequently made to customs of the English country.

The people, used to such exhibitions, acquired great aptitude for understanding plays. They did not need the elaborate decorations, accurate costumes, and other aids to the imagination which we find upon our theatres. A wooden platform with a few curtains and placards hung out to indicate the scene of action, was enough to carry them away to Rome, Jerusalem, or farthest India. The stage properties were very simple. In Henslowe's Inventory we find mention of only two pieces of moveable scenery—"the city of Rome" and "the cloth of the Sun and Moon;" but these even probably were mere emblems. Rocks, trees, dragons, steeples, and hellmouths we also hear about. Such objects were, no doubt, familiarly known and conventionally represented, according to the practice of the Miracles. It must, however, be remembered that between the time of Bale, who wrote the last Mysteries, and that of Inigo Jones, who decorated Heywood's masque of *Love's Mistress*, a considerable period had passed away, during which theatrical appliances had become more elaborate. The speeches of the actors and their gestures suggested all the local colouring which we put visibly before the eyes of the spectators. And this poverty of mechanical contrivances acted like a whetstone to the genius of the authors. They knew that on their use of language alone depended the success or failure of their plays. They were not hampered

by the demands of stage-managers and scene-painters for novel effects and striking tableaux. They only sought to stimulate the minds of those that heard their works, and to communicate to them by means of words some portion of the vivid pictures which appeared to their own fancy. Thus the splendid diction of our ancient dramatists, and the overflowing poetry of their descriptions, were fostered by the necessity each author felt of clearly summoning the scene before his eyes, and of translating the impressions it produced into language fit to rouse a like sense in his audience. The same freedom from stage scenery rendered him indifferent to unities of time and place. Each play was a creature of the imagination, and the mind can traverse the wilds of Asia or fix itself in more familiar scenes at will.

Nor did the actors derive less benefit from the simplicity of their stage. They were not lost upon the mighty wilderness of boards which modern actors tread, nor did gigantic representations of trees and houses and mountains dwarf their forms, drown their voices, and distract the eyes of the spectators from their gestures. They moved about upon a narrow space in full view of the assembled people. There was nothing to aid, there was nothing to impede their action. The poet's words alone were the medium through which their audience had to be impressed. Very often the actor was the author of the lines which he repeated. In this double capacity the practical acquaintance which he gained upon the stage directed his genius in the hours of composition, while the inspiration which enabled him to conceive a character, animated his impersonation of the same. In thinking of our Elizabethan drama, we must never forget the thorough sympathy which subsisted between the author and his audience, the simplicity of the stage, and the excellence of the actors. These three conditions favoured the colossal development which dramatic art attained in that age. Now they are no more. The lively interest, vivid passions, and quick fancy of those spectators can never be found within the pit or boxes of a modern house. Actor and author are both oppressed by mechanical ghosts, lime lights, dissolving views, and gorgeous landscapes. You can scarcely discern the pigmy stature of the one, or the small wit of the other, amid the blaze of light and colour which the mechanist throws round them.

In the lives of the dramatists themselves there was an intensity which communicated itself to their works. Most of them had risen from the ranks of the people. Marlowe was a cobbler's son. Ben Jonson was a mason. Shakspeare was the son of a woolseller, and Massinger of a domestic servant. Through the liberality of patrons and scholastic endowments, they received a learned education at the Universities, and then, pursued by debts and ill-repute, or simply from the love of the stage, they found their way to London, and adopted the profession of dramatic authors. First they became adapters of old plays, then playwrights on their own account, actors in small parts, or heroes of their own productions, proprietors of theatres, and shareholders in joint companies. These dramatists formed the first set of professional literary men. They were

ready to turn their abilities to any intellectual work, and lived entirely by their wits. Careless of posthumous fame, and simply anxious to earn money, they often worked in concert, confusing their own creations with those of brother authors. Of Thomas Heywood it is told that, beside acting, he wrote every day a page or two of some dramatic work, and left at his death 220 pieces. Many lines, perhaps, of *The Woman Killed with Kindness* have been jotted down at odd moments in the hubbub of a wretched tavern. A notion of his fertility and quickness of composition may be gained from a note appended to his "Nine Books of Various History concerning Women," a folio volume of 466 pages, in which he says, "Opus excogitatum, inchoatum, explicitum, et typographo excusum inter septemdecim septimanas." Decker passed three years in the prison of King's Bench. Massinger lived all his life in distressed circumstances, writing incessantly for bread, and begging money in most piteous tones from his noble patrons. Almost all of them were in the hands of Henslowe, an old usurer, and proprietor of the Fortune theatre. He lent them money and received their MSS. and clothes in pawn. For plays he would allow them prices varying from 7*l.* to 20*l.*, according to their quality, and to the fluctuations of the stage. Actors received a few shillings weekly, and some interest in the general receipts of the theatre. This money was spent without prudence, as they received it, in mere rioting and prodigality. The dramatists were very children in their self-indulgences, nor did their station in society rouse self-respect, or stimulate ambition in their souls. Though protected by royal charters, theatres depended for their existence upon the caprice of a monarch or his ministers. A large and influential body in the state were always attacking them as sources of public corruption. Playwrights and actors were regarded in the light of what Tacitus would call the "instrumenta libidinis et voluptatis" of the upper classes. In times of plague, or when the town was made too hot to hold them, they had to march about "on the hard hoof" from town to town. From the language which Shakespeare uses of himself in the Sonnets, it may be seen in what low esteem the "poor players" and their authors were held. The aristocracy looked down on them, while they beguiled their leisure moments with the products of their genius. They enrolled them among their servants, sometimes patting them and treating them with kindness, but soon forgetting their existence. The sensibilities of these poets were exposed to the rudest shocks. Their artistic love of pleasure had to be gratified in the lowest haunts of profligacy. They spent their time with women of bad character, with sharpers, thieves, and young men of loose life. Kyd died in poverty. Massinger went to his grave unrecognized, and in the register which notes his death, was entered, "Philip Massinger, a stranger." A ruffian murdered Marlowe in a tavern brawl. Peele hastened his end by debauchery, and succumbed at last to a horrible disease. Nash, the satirist, their comrade in vice, confessed that he had abused his talents and conspired with atheists and prodigals. But no picture of a mad, wicked, turbulent life, and of a terrible end, is

equal to that which Robert Greene has given of his own. We gather it from his prose tales and autobiographical papers, and from the address which he wrote on his deathbed to Marlowe, Lodge, and Peele. After leaving Cambridge he tells us that he travelled through Spain and Italy with some congenial comrades, "consuming the flower of his youth, and seeing and practising such villany as is abominable to declare." When he returned to England he took up his residence in London with people of bad character, and learned the tricks of thieves and sharpers. These he afterwards exposed in a curious pamphlet, called *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage*. "In London," he says, "I was drowned in pride. Gluttony with drunkenness was my only delight. Young in years, though old in wickedness, I became an author of plays, and a penner of love pamphlets." In the midst of the confession of these faults he describes the gnawing of his conscience and the dread of damnation which a sermon that he heard impressed upon his mind. When he tried to repent, his old companions taunted him and lured him back to dissipation. He was deserted by his virtuous friends and became a blasphemer of God. In this narrative we see the man himself openly disclosed to us in the strength of his passions and the weakness of his will, in his dread of judgment, and his impotence to lead a better life. Suddenly, under the influence of nobler aspirations, he marries a woman of good family and gentle breeding. But the old devil returns and persuades him to desert his wife, and squander her fortune among vagabonds and gamblers. A sister of a condemned felon bears him a son at this period of his life, whom he names "Infortunatus." Yet even in this utter degradation, noble speeches, sweet songs of pastoral life, pathetic tales of love and innocence, and delicate descriptions of natural beauty, flow from his pen. His soul is like a battlefield in which the good and evil strive for mastery, or like a hideous ruin overgrown with weeds, but visited by gleams of heavenly sunshine. The last act of Greene's life is the most piteous of all. We find him alone, attended only by a poor cordwainer's wife, unable from the lack of clothes to leave his bed, and dying of a surfeit. None of his boon companions visit him; but he remembers their bad lives, and warns them passionately to flee the wrath which has descended on his head. We possess this letter to his friends, and also one in which he addressed his injured wife. When Greene was dead, his landlady who had nursed him, and to whom he owed ten pounds, placed a wreath of bays upon his head and buried him. His funeral cost her four shillings for his winding-sheet, and six shillings and fourpence for the burial dues. She sold his sword and doublet for three shillings.

Such were the men who wrote the multitude of plays of which we have a scanty remnant, men with whom Shakspeare lived and thought and worked, who knew him familiarly, who classed him with Heywood and Decker, who praised him for "his right happy and copious industry," or who, like Ben Jonson, wished that he had learned to decimate his lines. When we reflect upon their lives, we are stirred with wonder at the vast activity of their intellect. They thought and felt with

energy. They used their vigour in rivalry with one another and in most laborious studies. They squandered their health on pleasures of the most exciting kind. Yet those who were not cut off by disease lived long and never idle lives. The force of their brains must have been prodigious. It must be remembered that men had but just turned their attention to literary pursuits, and that the intellects of previous generations had not been debilitated by continual studies or a sedentary life. On the contrary, the dramatists were descended from ancestors who led an animal existence, breeding strong passions during the wars of many centuries, and storing up physical energy in agricultural and other out-of-door pursuits. Nor must it be supposed that all of them were so indigent and profligate as those we have described. Out of the thirty eminent dramatists and the minor ones who during more than half a century wrote for the eleven theatres of London, many were men of good repute, and some were distinguished by their noble birth. Beaumont and Fletcher both sprang from gentle families. So did Davenant and Killigrew. Ford was a respectable lawyer, and Webster a grave and thoughtful man. Lodge became an eminent physician. Ben Jonson, though poor and eccentric in his habits, won the respect of all classes, and was a friend of gentlemen and scholars. Chapman is represented to us as a literary courtier of the most refined description. These men among themselves enjoyed the charms of thoroughly congenial society. They met at the Mermaid or some other tavern, under the dictatorship of Jonson, conversed, and called each other by familiar names. Heywood, in some genial verses, has enumerated all the Toms and Jacks, the Kits and Franks and Robins, of these friendly meetings. He says,—

Mellifluous Shakspeare, whose enchanting quill
Commanded mirth or passion, was but Will;
And famous Jonson, though his learned pen
Be dipt in Castaly, is still but Ben.

It may readily be understood that jealousies sprang up between them. The quarrels of Jonson and Marston are well known. But they seem to have been amicably adjusted, and on the appearance of some new play by one of the society, the other poets greeted it with commendatory verses. It is remarkable that though Shakspeare received many of these marks of admiration, not a single line of praise conferred by him upon a brother bard has been preserved to us. Still, notwithstanding this brighter aspect of theatrical society, the tone of the stage was determined by men like Greene and Marlowe; nor can we fail to sympathize to some extent with the furious onslaught made by Prynne and other puritans upon their evil lives and influence. It is to be regretted that in the zeal of these reformers, many works of English genius have been lost irretrievably.

Notwithstanding the great powers of our dramatists, the stage could not have been developed without an audience eager in its interests, intelligent in its sympathy with the authors, and capable of stimulating them in their exertions. The public to which they appealed was the

whole English nation, from Elizabeth down to the lowest ragamuffin of the streets. In the same wooden theatres sat lords and ladies, citizens and common porters, sailors, pickpockets, and countryfolk. The houses were of two kinds, public and private, the difference between them being that the former were larger and more rude, being only partly covered in by a thatched shed or "heaven," and partly open to the air, while the latter were small and entirely enclosed. By paying a penny you were admitted to the yard, an open space in the centre of the house, where people stood and walked about. Only the lower classes frequented this part of the theatre, whence came the name of "groundling." Galleries and private boxes, which they also called "rooms," were reserved for families who paid a little more. But the most distinguished seat of all was on the stage itself, where young men sat and showed their finery, and smoked, and laughed, and mocked the actors. They were provided for a shilling with three-legged stools, or else they lay upon their cloaks. Often these gallants disturbed the play so much that the groundlings in the yard would pelt them with stones and oranges, and not unfrequently they came to blows. Or perhaps the actors were at fault, and then the people cried out, and got upon the boards and beat them off, or pulled the woodwork of the theatre about their ears. Before the curtain rose the audience ate and drank, flirted and played at cards, groaned and mewled like cats, and made a hubbub far worse than one may hear at Astley's now-a-days. The exhibitions took place always in the afternoon. The smaller covered theatres were illuminated by torches and candles. The larger houses needed no artificial light. Wet or fine, the audience did not care. They stood up happy in hot sun or drenching rain upon the mud-floor of the yard, to gaze upon the state of Tamburlaine, or to listen to the soliloquies of Hamlet. All the theatres were situated in low parts of the city near the Thames. They were frequently burned down and easily rebuilt, resembling nothing better than the sheds and awnings of a country circus. It is clear from this description how genuine must have been the inspiration of poets who could write for such a stage, and how strong were the interests of an audience who could tolerate its inconvenience and understand its aims.

In tracing the circumstances under which our theatre was developed, it has been impossible to take more than a rapid and passing glance at the works of those great dramatic poets who surrounded Shakspeare, and who with him exerted so powerful an influence over the formation of our language and our literature. We are too apt to forget that any authors held the stage except him whom England and the world has idolized. This, however, is an error of our indolence. In his lifetime he seemed one among many, pre-eminent it is true, but as a colleague rather than as a king. Even now, in looking back upon the period, we can trace the brilliancy of many planets hardly inferior to the sun whose name was Shakspeare.

How Dike Did Mont Blanc.

THE ascent of Mont Blanc is usually called a very cockney affair. Moreover, it has been talked about, and written about, and lectured about, till one might suppose that every part of the mountain, from the Hotel in Chamonix to the summit of the Calotte, was as well known to the British public as the hills which stand about London. But one member, at least, of the British public, had always found it impossible to make out, from any of the numerous histories of ascents, what there really was of difficulty, and what of danger, in reaching the highest point of Europe; and with the view of satisfying himself on this question he determined upon trying to accomplish the task. The training gone through in preparation for the struggle amounted to two days on a sofa in Geneva, with threatenings of bilious fever, and incessant attention to a leg which medical skill said *might* be patched up sufficiently for ordinary walking—these being the results of many hot, fatiguing days among the lower mountains, and corresponding nights of unsuccessful skirmishing with the population of Continental beds.

Call this ill-trained person, ignorant of glaciers, G., and his companion, a young fellow of seventeen, who had spent a fortnight in creditable ice excursions, H. The guide was a Zermatt man, whom they had taken with them to Chamonix, and when P. P. are given as his initials any connoisseur of high mountains will know that a better guide could not have been found. As a cheerful practical proof of the absence of danger in the ascent, there arrived simultaneously at Chamonix the complete leg and foot of one of the party lost in 1820, which had been found that afternoon on the Glacier des Boissons, and was exhibited to the new arrivals before burial.

It had been intended to take one porter from Chamonix to the sleeping place on the Grands Mulets, to carry the necessary provisions, and another to accompany the party to the summit as under-guide. But when they applied at the bureau for a porter, the *chef-guide* proved to G. with much politeness, from the printed regulations, that it was impossible to attempt the ascent without one guide and one porter for each monsieur. The *règlement* declares that this number is necessary for *courses dangereuses*. G. claimed exemption on the ground that, as no one could call the Mont Blanc a dangerous course, the rule must have been made for the Breven or the Mauvais Pas. But when politeness and reason have failed with a Frenchman, chaff is scarcely likely to succeed, and the *chef* merely bowed stiffly, and remarked that if monsieur would pardon him, the Mont Blanc was the most dangerous of the many *courses*

dangereuses of the *règlement*, and he could not possibly supply less than three men to assist P. P.

P. P. being a Swiss, and therefore impatient of interference with the liberty of mankind, agreed with the Herrs that under no circumstances would they submit, after he had vainly suggested that as one of the members of the Alpine Club had the same name as G., the difficulty might be evaded, for members of that Club can take what number of guides they choose. When he had listened to a homily on the immorality of his suggestion, he made off into the village, and by good fortune found a Courmayeur man, who was on the point of returning home. This man was of course not bound by the laws of the place respecting guides and porters for Mont Blanc, and he agreed to make a fourth to the summit, and to carry his share of food and night-clothing to the Grands Mulets; but the *chef-guide* heard of the arrangement in some roundabout way, and illegally captured and concealed the Courmayeur man, and so reduced the party to their elements again. Fortune did not therefore cease to smile upon their efforts, for P. P. discovered a master-shoemaker who was anxious to make the ascent, and would be only too glad to accompany the party *pour son plaisir*, and carry half the things. Of course he was to be paid something, privately, but for all public purposes he was a gentleman at large, and the *chef-guide* dared not meddle with him. And thus they were at length complete, one guide, two Herrs, and one master-shoemaker.

The amount of food to be carried may be imagined from the following copy of the bill:—

PROVISIONS : MONT BLANC.

	Fr.	Ct.		Fr.	Ct.
Thé	5	0	Brought forward.....	43	50
Café	5	0	Fromage	2	0
Sucre	3	0	Pruneaux	3	0
Viande de bœuf	5	0	½ bll. Cognac	4	50
Jambon	6	0	1 flacon Cognac	4	0
1 rôti de veau	6	0	7 blles. vin ord.	7	0
2 gros poulets	10	0	1 bougie et 1 chandelle	1	50
Sel et poivre	0	50	Verres perdus	2	0
12 œufs	3	0	Gros et pt. pain.....	3	0
Carried forward	43	50		70	50

Ferdinand Eisenkraemer, of the Hôtel Royal, possesses, for three months in the year, a secretary, who manages all these matters. The guide of the party meditating an ascent goes to the bureau of this gentleman, and orders provisions for Mont Blanc for so many persons, and the secretary puts up what he thinks proper. It is evident, also, that he charges what he thinks proper. The present secretary is a schoolmaster, whose pupils are handed over to his wife for the Chamonix season, and let us hope that she inculcates those lessons of moderation and honesty which her husband is meanwhile putting in practice. He is a man of friendly manner, and of much imagination, which last has developed itself in a new table of

capacities, apropos to his arithmetical work with his pupils in the dull season. Two Swiss, he says in his heart, one Frank; four Franks, one Boule. He therefore loves the English much, as a people of stomach and of purse,—nay, he not only loves, he worships the golden image. He believes, or professes to believe, that they can eat any amount of food when they make a *course*, and pay any amount of money for it when they return. The fervour with which he squeezes an English hand is but a faint shadowing forth of the operation he performs upon the purse. And yet there are immense charms in the Hôtel Royal at Chamonix, in the excellence and *négligée* of its table-d'hôte, the comfort of its beds, the picturesque undulations of its billiard-table, and the sublime glories of its mountain views.

The shoemaker was not promising, as far as personal appearance went. He was sickly and small, and had a large white nose, through which he snuffled when he was in pluck, and whined when he wasn't. His name, he said, was Friedrich Zimmerman, of Thun; on which G. informed him that, as a testimony to his pluck in thus attempting the ascent, he should be called, not Zimmerman, but Immer-mann—which seemed to delight him much, and add something to his stature and his step. He began at once to explain what must be done, on their return, to obtain the certificate of the *chef-guide*, which that exalted personage gives—for five francs—to all who make the ascent; and when he was told that it would be time enough to talk about that when the ascent was made, he said proudly that he had already made a promenade to the Breven last year (5,000 feet above Chamonix,) without much fatigue, and had once reached St. Bernard in two days.

The seven bottles of vin ordinaire were in reality only six, and of these P. P. had decanted four into a waterproof bag, which in its turn was carried in a waterproof knapsack, and as the *verres perdus* of the bill represent the missing fabric of the remaining two, it would seem that empty bottles are a valuable property in France. Before they had gone far, P. P.'s back discovered that neither bag nor knapsack was wine-proof, and as Zimmerman began to find himself very hot, G. took charge of the coats of both. This slight relief was not of much use to the shoemaker when they reached the steep zigzags of the forest, and he walked last, and cried constantly, "Doucement! doucement!" causing P. P. to become vocal with a song of two lines, repeated *ad libitum*—

Langsam voran! langsam voran!

Damit der letzte Mann nachkommen kann!*

varied with prose declarations that a good guide's motto should always be,

* It is to be hoped that the shoemaker did not know the Folk-song of which this is possibly a corruption, for the comparison with the Austrian Landsturm would not have pleased him,—

"Nur immer langsam voran! langsam voran!

Dass der Oestreicher Landsturm nachkommen kann;

Die Oestreicher haben eine Schanz' erbaut

Aus lauter Speck und Sauerkraut."

Langsam, aber immer. Still the shoemaker fell more and more behind, and it became evident that no amount of *langsam* would ensure the *nachkommen* : so a halt was called, and the bundle of rug and wraps transferred to G.'s back.

But all was of no avail, and within an hour and a quarter of Chamonix he came to a total stand. The knapsack of provisions was taken from him, and all that was his was eliminated from the bundle of wraps and thrown on to the zigzag way, and then he was ignominiously turned out of the party, and told that neither Zimmerman nor Immer-mann should henceforth be his name, but, instead, Nimmer-mann. P. P. said that a small auberge was being built higher up, and it might be possible to find a porter there, so he and G. made a division of the baggage, II. being by general consent too young for such work, and they once more started in hope.

At the Pierre Pointue a new and cheap and excellent little auberge was found, kept by Sylvain Couttet, and attended to by his pleasant wife. In future ascents, it will be a good plan to purchase all provisions here, and so avoid the extortions of Chamonix, and save the porters some of their toil. Sylvain was speedily persuaded to carry half the baggage to the Grands Mulets, and they went off across the rocks in high spirits, Nimmer-mann coming on still behind, with snuffling declarations that he would at least cross the glacier, and even bursting forth into a nasal song in proof of his restored pluck. But he was sternly bidden to cease—it was not for him, of all men, to dare to sing; and, as for the glacier, he should not put one foot upon it, with all those horrible crevasses. And so he was half bullied, half frightened into returning with a party whom they found at the Pierre à l'Echelle, one of whom did his best to turn H. back because of the lightness of his clothing,* which had already stood the blustering cold of a storm on Monte Rosa; and another, a most agreeable Frenchman, showered evil omens on the expedition by persisting in calling P. P. Benin, and correcting himself each time with a shudder, and *Ah! ce pauvre Benin, il est mort!*† When P. P. heard that this gentleman was a member of the Alpine club, he added the word *Suisse* with much scorn, but his scorn became intense respect when he was told how worthily he had been elected into the English club. Good guides are too much in the way of affecting to despise this Swiss club. Thus a famous guide refused to accompany one of its officers, because, as he said, he found the

* This gentleman was afterwards proved, on unmistakable internal evidence, to be the author of several interesting papers on glacier excursions. In one of these he has described his outfit for Mont Blanc, which he believes cannot be improved upon:—“A merino waistcoat, then two light flannel shirts, chamois-leather waistcoat, and over these a double-breasted cloth waistcoat, a light kind of ‘lounging-coat,’ and light over-coat. For the nether garments, a pair of stout trowsers, and two pairs of drawers.” The lightness of H.’s clothing might well surprise him. G., too, had only an old pair of trowsers, cut short at the knee, made of very thin flannel.

† Lost in an avalanche on the Haut de Cry, in the spring of 1864.

English club climbed better and paid better. Another guide tells that when his Herrs were dining in a certain hotel, members of the Swiss club sent a message from another hotel in the town, proposing fraternization. He answered that his Herrs were at dinner, and must not be disturbed; he would see about it after dinner. Meanwhile he paid a visit of inspection, and found that the Swiss gentlemen had umbrellas with spikes, paper pantofles, and black coats and trowsers—so he burked the message entirely.

Apropos of this story, when the present party met two foreign gentlemen, utterly done, on the Tête Noire, with black hats and patent leather boots, it was thoughtlessly and unkindly suggested that they were members of the Swiss Alpine Club, but the difficulty was—only one had an umbrella. “Ah!” it was still more unkindly explained, “it’s a swell taking his young friend over the Tête Noire pass, to qualify for the stock of the club.”

Certain young malcontents of the canton Valais have conceived a disapproval of the principles of this club, and propose to form a rival society. They are to perform real feats, so they say, in the way of ascents, and, to show their contempt for the pretensions of other clubs, are to call themselves the Order of the Broomstick, meaning the alpenstock, and their president the Grand Ramoneur. It might be suggested to them that if they would carry *brooms* also, as a part of the paraphernalia of the order, they might do something towards cleaning their native Valais, and then the travelling world would heartily wish them the success which attended an ancient hero in a similar labour.

The most interesting part of the whole ascent now commenced, across the shattered ice-fall of the Glacier des Boissons, and up the ice and snow to the Grands Mulets—a collection of rocks in the midst of the higher glaciers. A few minutes of jumping across crevasses, and winding along ice-bridges and up “vertical precipices” of the same material, sufficed to show that the danger here was simply nothing, as far as the fall of a man was concerned, unless he was very determinedly bent upon falling; but from P. P.’s *vite!* when the party passed the base of any of the overhanging pyramids of ice, it seemed that there was more room for a mischance there. Indeed, a very competent authority has laid it down as a law of nature—or, at least of the more adventurous members of the English Alpine Club—that the only danger in mountain climbing is from avalanches and falling stones and ice; for the guides have too strong an affection for their own necks—or, shall we say, for their wives and little children?—to put themselves in positions beyond their skill.

Perhaps the most striking part of a tyro’s first extensive glacier lesson is the ease with which difficulties are circumvented, and the excellent foot-hold afforded by glacier ice. Nor is anything more instructive and assuring than the first fall. With a young horse at an early fence, and with young climbers on their first glacier, a fall is an excellent thing.

It teaches a man the wonderful use of the rope, and gives him thereby much confidence; and if, like the young horse, he is careless, which is not very probable, it teaches him also to look to his feet. He goes crashing down, with much clattering of icicles and the rattle of a truant alpenstock, and has about time to conceive the idea that he is gone for ever, when a sudden and unpleasant strain upon his waist pulls him up short, and he hangs for a moment all ways, like a wounded rook in a tree, till he is hauled up by his neighbours on the rope, regardless alike of the projecting keenness of ice-points and of the due precedence of head and feet.

When our friends had been an hour or so on the ice, they heard the cannon of Chamonix announcing the arrival at the Grands Mulets of a party which had left the other hotel an hour before them; and though the prolonged iniquities of the wretched Nimmer-mann had so much delayed them, they found on arriving that they had gained on the others. The great Murray says that the hut on the oasis of rocks is 10,000 feet above the sea; and, though the verbal inspiration of that book is the last theory a Swiss traveller is likely to take up, there seems to be no particular reason for doubting this measurement. But when it is added that "the excitement of sleeping out in the mountain is part of the interest of the adventure," the most diluted theory of inspiration is too strong. There are few places on the face of the earth more abominable than that little hut and its environs. When the present party reached it, they found two Englishmen already established there, with more than the Chamonix allowance: two guides, namely, and three porters; and three other porters had accompanied them to the Grands Mulets, and returned to Chamonix. The Englishmen had finished their meal, and were preparing for *écarté*—amiably converted into *whist*—on the stones outside; but the hut was pervaded by guides and porters in every stage of unpleasantness. There were wet boots and damp men smoking before the little stove, the men lying about uncouthly and uncourtously, doing their unpolished best to ignore the new arrivals, who were infringing every golden rule of Chamonix. No ascent had been this year made by the Grands Mulets, but there had been various attempts, and the disappointed travellers had left the *débris* of their meals to become unpleasant in every corner of the hut. Fourteen feet by seven is its size, and although its foulness cannot well be imagined, it may be more easily imagined than described. It was not much satisfaction to hear that Couttet had undertaken to build a better hut the next week, and that 120 guides and porters had promised to carry each one plank in solemn single file, a procession which would drain half Switzerland of rascality.* The new hut was to have two beds, and the old one to be left for the use of guides and porters only.

Tea is a beverage most refreshing on the mountains, and tea had been

* Not that this present writer believes, with so many of his countrymen, that Mont Blanc is in Switzerland.

looked forward to with much eagerness; but the opposition guides had possessed themselves of the only pan, and had commenced to make soup therein—soup which, even in its beginning, gave forth odours of a compound vileness which suggested what its maturer moments would be. As the time passed on—it was now five o'clock, and they had eaten nothing to speak of since an early breakfast—"Is the soup ready?" was constantly demanded from without, and "No" as constantly answered from within; not that the Herrs wanted the soup, but they did want the pan. Those five men must have denied themselves their soup for a good hour, that they might enjoy the thirst of the wretches who had dared to come on Chamonix ground, without a pack of Chamonix guides. And when the soup was made and swallowed, the snow was still to be dug for making the tea, and it seemed to be as obstinately slow in melting as the soup had been in making.

Meantime P. P. took an opportunity of representing to his Herrs that if there should arrive anything, three was not a good number. An injured man could not be left alone, and, on the other hand, it would not be well for one to go alone for help; so he strongly advised that, if possible, Couttet should be retained for the ascent. Now Couttet at the Grands Mulets was a man of higher price than Couttet under competition pressure, and so it came to pass that a long time was spent in making francs mean half francs, and then it was time for bed. The Chamonix men kept the places near the fire for their Herrs, and for two of themselves—the guides to wit; then the other Herrs reposed themselves, and then the remaining five; every one, of course, lying on the floor. But when the Herrs were settling down to dream of sleep, the guides, with one accord, got up to eat and drink and make a noise; and the clatter of bottles, and pots, and tongues, and the undulations of the floor on which the Herrs lay, as the heavy feet tramped up and down between the stove and the provision-shelf, to say nothing of more serious results when the feet were careless as well as heavy, banished all idea of sleep. Moreover, the damp and evil odour of the floor came reeking through the rug, and added a yet viler group to the *mélange* of vile smells, while all the angular contents of the knapsacks rose to the upper side, and tested the hardness of the heads which lay thereon. And when the hunger of the guides was appeased, and their tongues became more still, and the candle was blown out, and peace by comparison seemed near at hand, an evil worse than all rose into being. Seven rough men, and one guilty Herr, sleeping, after a heavy supper, with their heads lower than their bodies, and their mouths open, produced a variety and an amount of noise utterly inconceivable. For some time G. tapped sharply on the floor with his heel at each crisis, and a prompt responsive thud told that a Chamonix man had interrupted his own snoring, and was taking it out of P. P.'s back, P. P. being a noted performer in that line; but nothing produced any permanent improvement, and G. and the unsuccessful smiter got up, and spent the remainder of the night in the open air.

The tender-hearted moon was lavish of her purest splendours to reconcile them to the cold, and the ice and snow thundered forth their most majestic harmonies, as they poured in white and sinuous bands down distant precipices of rock. The very vacuum was moved which years of the Chamonix tariff had created in the guide's breast, and he grunted his unfeigned assent, between prolonged whiffs of tobacco-smoke, to the proposition that, even if they saw nothing from the summit, the weird waste and weird crashes of ice and snow would amply repay their toil. As a rule, however, it is not fair to draw upon a guide for sentiment, as that commodity is not in the bond, and the *chef-guide* has no tariff price for it.

At a quarter to one they ventured to return to the hut, to rouse the various sources of sound into activity of a more useful kind; and the fire in the stove was easily restored to sufficient vigour to melt a fresh allowance of snow, and produce a decoction of tea. The five Chamonix men, with the assistance of the departed three, had brought, at their Herrs' expense, abundant food for holding the Grands Mulets for many days, and they now suggested to the owners of this extensive larder that it might be better to eat something. The other party also proceeded to make a selection from their more limited yet most magnificent store, but the vile air of the hut backed up P. P.'s cautious *nur ein wenig* only too decidedly. Then came the dressing for the ascent. P. P. possessed himself of his Herrs' boots, and ran melted candle on to every part of them, especially about the laces and the part by which boots are pulled on; and woollen helmets and magnified babies' gloves completed their preparation, except that G. was persuaded by P. P. to put on a thin Inverness cape, with the sleeves tied behind, and H. assumed a thicker scarf. The getting-up of the other party by their guides and porters was a sight to see, and P. P. sniffed a heterodox scorn in rare intervals of hard-boiled eggs. A Herr was caught, and extended on his back on the bench near the fire, with naked feet. Round each foot paper was then wrapped, made soft and binding with much candle, the head guide going through all the graces of a young hospital dresser who thinks he has a turn that way. Then, with much ceremony, the stockings were put on, and another layer of grease run in, produced by the application of candle-ends to the surface of the opportune stove. Then came the boots, stiff and white already with over-night grease, and coated now afresh. Over all, a pair of long brown cloth leggings, tied at top with gay red garters, with bows and flying ends. When all this was done, and the Herr turned off the bench, he not unnaturally remarked that it was as well he knew from previous knowledge which were his feet, for he had no present sensation to guide him in appropriating a pair.

These ceremonies occupied a considerable time, for the guides and porters seemed to think it right that each should do something, and it required a good deal of lengthy manœuvring and stage action to bring all five to bear upon one pair of feet; and when the feet were finished, long

after the patience of the other party, the head of the Chamonix men suggested to his accomplices, dubiously—like a man in a play—that they might, perhaps, eat a little of something: an operation which lasted a good half hour, and put out of sight much calf, and a family of cocks and hens. De Saussure was still more unfortunate, for his eighteen guides kept him till half-past six, quarrelling about the adjustment of the baggage, each fearing lest an extra half pound should make him the victim of a weak snow-bridge.

P. P. now informed his Herrs that the other guides had proposed that the two parties should start together, and each cut half the steps, to which he had agreed: so all the eleven, Herrs and guides and porters, scrambled down from the hut and bade farewell to the rock until their return to the Grands Mulets after eleven hours of ice and snow. The first cord held the party of seven: a guide at the head, then a Herr, then another guide, then the other Herr, and the three porters brought up the rear in a body. P. P. of course headed his own rope, with Couttet at the other end and the Herrs in the middle. It was curious to see the antics of the chief of the Chamonix guides. Taking his axe, stock downwards, between his finger and thumb, he pranced carefully off the rock and delicately felt and probed the snow, making a step in advance with the air of a man ready to do and die, but determined to do and die with science. Whether he impressed his own people, did not appear; but the party behind scoffed and moved onwards, and then he theatrically made up his mind that it was safe to proceed. The snow was in perfect order, crisp and smooth, and requiring a considerable stamp in the steeper parts before impression sufficient for a foot-hold could be made. As this was the first ascent of the year by the Grands Mulets, the only previous ascent having been made from the other side, the swelling slopes lay rounded off in virgin purity, and shone and glittered in the strong moonlight with all the firm fulness of nine unbroken months of incessant cold. And when the sun rose behind the Aiguille de Charmoz, converting countless peaks into Aiguilles Rouges, the exuberant domes of snow put on that satin sheen of gossamer which underlies the bark of silver birch.

The effect of the winter had been very great upon that part of the mountain which lies between the Grands Mulets and the Grand Plateau; and when the Herrs of the smaller party found that the guides must discover a fresh path among new crevasses, and give up the line they had been accustomed to take, they forgot to feel like cockneys tramping on a treadmill, and the ascent assumed the charms of experiment and novelty. Some time before arriving at the Plateau, and before one step had been cut, the Chamonix party dropped behind, and P. P. led; and as they never came to the front again, he had to cut every step of the whole ascent.

On the Grand Plateau, where for a mile or two the snow is almost level, the four held a serious discussion, the others being out of sight in the rear: at least P. P. and Couttet discussed, and the Herrs sat on the

snow, and drank cold tea and listened. There was a choice of routes ; and the day was so exquisitely clear and still, that difficulties arising from wind and cloud need not be considered, and the routes could be judged on their merits alone.

The three points of attack lay in front, spread out like a fan round the upper end of the Plateau. On the left, the ascent to the Corridor : impossible, from its long steepness, to the ignorant eye, and almost equally impossible to the experienced eyes of P. P. and Couttet, from the state of the crevasses at its foot, which seemed in the distance to be more than usually unpropitious. Moreover, it was the longest of the routes by an hour and a half. To the right was the base of the Dôme du Gouté, and if only the overhanging glacier would be merciful, that was a most recommendable route ; but P. P. argued that it was very possible that when that little difficulty had been got through, and they arrived at the Bosse du Dromadaire, they might find the whole length of the final Arête mere blue ice, and that would cost immense labour and much time. Finally, between the two, lay the Ancien Passage. It looked smooth and pleasant enough, and it was a short cut to the top, which about that time was certainly a consideration. But the Ancien Passage has a history, and is a passage for something else besides men. Here Dr. Hamel's guides were lost in an avalanche in 1820 ; and for the last three years thermometers and lanterns and scalps and limbs have been coming out from the glacier miles and miles below, and reminding the valley of Chamonix of the terrors of the heights above. So when Couttet argued that the day was most still and fine, and the snow in a better state than he had ever seen it, and when he declared that he would guarantee that no avalanche should sweep the Ancien Passage that morning, the Herrs called to mind the shrunk leg and contorted foot they had seen two days before, lying swathed in the boughs of trees at the wooden cross in Chamonix, and they heartily ratified P. P.'s determination to have nothing to do with that route.

By this time the other party had come up, and their guides were wholly in favour of the Corridor ; so while they made their halt P. P. led on towards that side of the amphitheatre. Couttet renewed his arguments for the Ancien Passage as soon as they were out of hearing of the Chamonix men, saying that he was sure they meant to try it, and so reach the top first. But he prevailed nothing, and P. P. went steadily for the crevasses guarding the foot of the snow wall which drops from the Corridor to the Plateau—went steadily, but doubtfully, for he feared that the winter's changes had made the route impracticable. The ice and snow, however, must be very obstinate through which those keen divergent Zermatt eyes can find no path, and the four had already been performing the part of flies for a quarter of an hour or so on the wall, when a noise more expressive than thunder brought them to a stand. As they clung to the frozen snow, and glanced out to the right, they saw the Ancien Passage swept by an avalanche of ice-blocks sufficient

to have shattered all Chamonix. The whole broad couloir through its utmost length appeared to be in breathless motion, and far down on to the Plateau the vast masses roared and ran, as if some evil spirit within were urging each on furiously farther than the other. P. P. gazed sternly on the rolling chaos with the left eye, and deftly flashed on Couttet the reproachful right, asking with expressive thumb where was his guarantee. H. constituted himself the spokesman of the party, and observed with characteristic nonchalance that by Jove it was as well they were not there! Some time after, when they were near the top of the snow wall, another avalanche swept down the passage, and they had the satisfaction of feeling that if they had adopted that route they must have missed the grandeur of this second sight and sound.

The Corridor was rather dreary walking, with only a slight ascent, and nothing more interesting than softish snow; but at the upper end a glorious view of southward peaks opened out, and the Mont Maudit in the immediate foreground was exceedingly grand. Here, in obedience to the sun's warnings, extra wraps were taken off before commencing the assault of the interminable height of the Mur de la Côte, up the whole of which no single step was made in advance without the assistance of P. P.'s axe. The other party had made no halt at the head of the Corridor, and were now within distant hail; and it was amusing to hear after a time the voice of their head guide coming rolling up the ice, with a request that P. P. would cut the steps a little nearer to each other, as his *monsieurs* found them rather wide.

Step-cutting is generally a slow process, and on clear blue ice it is not bad to accomplish an average of one a minute; but here the continuity of the ice surface was sometimes broken by frozen snow, which cut more readily, and so the second party never caught them up. The short halt after each step, while the next was being cut, made the ascent of the strangely smooth and steep Mur an easy matter for the Herrs, and allowed abundance of time for attempting to appreciate the view. But whether it had really been harder work than it seemed, or whether the diminishing amount of necessary air began to produce an effect, G. called a halt at the top of the Mur, on the edge of the level plain which leads to the final Calotte, and harangued the party in general. It was not, he said, that he was in any way losing pluck, but he was decidedly—in the body—somewhat gravelled, and he must call for constant short halts for the remainder of the ascent. Since an early breakfast the day before (and it was now eight o'clock in the morning,) he had eaten, he declared, a certain amount of bread and butter, and the thigh of a Chamonix poulet, the *gros* in the bill referring to the price rather than the size of the bird. Besides, he was taking up a lame leg to the summit, which every second step made more lame, and faintness and fatigue together produced a sort of *mal de mer*. P. P. answered that he was very glad the Herr had spoken out, instead of ruining the ascent by foolishly struggling on till he was done. H., on the other hand, did

not like it quite so well. He was fresher than when they started, and was evidently good for a rapid race to the summit, and moreover was terribly afraid lest the other party should reach the top almost as soon as they, for then the world of Chamonix, now gazing eagerly with all its telescopes from the other side of the mountain, would believe that the parties had made the ascent together. So he kept helping G. with a tug of the rope when the step was steeper than usual, timing the tug with more zeal than discretion, and cheering him on with a youthful ingenuousness which made that aged and emotionless traveller smile in spite of himself;—now crying, “See how near we are! a *few* minutes more!” and now appealing to other feelings, and declaring that the party below was coming on apace. For the last quarter of an hour or so this ceased, for the absolute proximity of the desired summit banished for the moment all fatigue, and they mounted promptly to the final crest. Here they found that twenty yards off there was a point of snow a foot higher than the level of the crest, and these twenty yards G.’s body and soul refused to face; but before he had time to collapse, H. put a strong pull on the rope, and hauled him along with tottering steps to the true summit, whence they heard the cannon of Chamonix sending up a triumphant welcome. There was a similar point in De Saussure’s times, and he has left it on record that he kicked it, rather with anger than with any sentiment of pleasure.

It has been written airily, in a book which treats of Alpine matters, that, on arriving at the top of a certain difficult pass, the historian of the ascent proceeded to make what observations he could; whereas the guide believes that at that interesting crisis his Herr simply threw himself on his face and howled, the only observations made being, “I wish I was down again!” “I wish I was dead!” This of course is a calumny; but when a long and elaborate account is drawn up of all that can be seen from some point which has cost the writer many hours of incessant and immense fatigue, one seems to see him in an arm-chair in his study, striking *ex-post-facto* lines of view on the map with a ruler. And so the less that is said of the view on this present occasion the better, beyond the bare fact that on three sides out of four the most perfect clearness prevailed.

From the head of the Corridor they had seen the whole mass of Monte Rosa and the Mont Cervin, and all the famous peaks which realize the early fable of the giants’ war with heaven, and now the Oberland and Dauphiné were added to the view. H. turned his undivided attention to a box of sardines, which the numerous porters of the second party had contrived to bring to the summit; and a warm discussion regarding the respective merits of butter and sardines brought poor G.’s woes to the point of despair, inasmuch as the mere sight of an innocent bread-crust had been too much for him. In vain P. P. pointed out the Dauphiné Alps, he only groaned and turned away. Ah! now, P. P. told him, he could see the Monte Rosa peaks—and again he groaned and

turned away; now, the Bernese mountains; till at last he studiously faced a thick mist which concealed the lower parts of Neuchatel and Vaud: but even there P. P. had him, and explained what he would have seen had there been no mist. There was nothing for it but to descend a little into denser air, so H. was ruthlessly torn from his sardines and carried off down the Calotte.

About twenty minutes from the top they met a friend ascending all alone. He had left Chamonix half an hour after midnight with one porter; but this porter had come to an end of his promised pluck shortly after the Grands Mulets, and returned; and so the Herr came on alone, making use of the steps cut by P. P., and accomplishing a feat never accomplished before. While they slowly continued the descent, and the solitary adventurer passed on to the summit and drank his champagne and ate his poulet, P. P. gave expression to the most unbounded astonishment. He knew this Herr's powers well, had made many courses with him and others of the best members of the Alpine Club, and had said only the day before that there was not one who could compare with him: still he was completely overcome by the adventurousness of the ascent. "Ah!" he kept repeating, "das-ist ein grieslicher Herr!" and *grieslich* being a new word, he was called upon for an explanation. It seemed that Christian Almer and he had been discussing various Herrscraft, and among the chief, this present Herr, whom Almer had summed up with a deep sigh, reminiscent of many a grind more severe than his soul loved, and "das war ein grieslicher Reisender!" P. P. confessed that it was patois, not meant for *grässlich*, and believed that no German or French word would quite hit it off. It was far on the other side of *schrecklich*, and a good deal beyond *heillos*, and *heillos*, a great authority has declared, means past praying for.

The grieslicher Herr came up with them again at the top of the Mur de la Côte, and administered the remains of the champagne. Here G.'s physical faintness caused him to develop that excessive and sharp-tempered prudence which is so near akin to fright. To an inexperienced eye the appearance of the rapid, even slope of ice and frozen snow, across and down the face of which they must follow the steps cut in the morning, was so unpleasant, that no account could well exaggerate it. The ice seemed to shoot clean down to the Corridor, with a slight rocky edge at the bottom, beyond which an insignificant drop to the Corridor might be imagined. But in passing up the Corridor in the ascent, they had noticed this same drop, and instead of finding it insignificant, they had been struck with the grand loftiness of the precipice; and the recollection of that impression afforded a most suggestive measure of what must be the length of the slope, at the bottom of which the drop could now seem so small. H. had fed well, and was practised, and, moreover, had experienced the power of the rope. G., on the other hand, light-headed and heavy-footed, made every step in the belief that if he slipped he must inevi-

tably carry the other three down with him. The grieslicher Herr, meantime, danced unroped behind, doing Albert Smith's account of the horrors of the Mur.

The descent from the Corridor to the Plateau was something the same, only rather less so, to use for once a slang expression. Rather less so, inasmuch as, although steeper, it was more snow than ice, and ended in a shelving blue crevasse instead of a solid pitch over rocks; and besides, the Plateau once reached, nothing worse than fatigue remained behind.

On the Plateau the party halted for a long time, and discussed the ascent. H. had never thought it could be so easy, and so little dangerous, and could scarcely believe that he had at last been up Mont Blanc. G. allowed that the *ascent* was in all ways less than he had expected, but expressed his great surprise that so many people had achieved the *descent* in safety, and his satisfaction that he was well out of it. Here for the first time he was set right about the power of the rope, and was informed that P. P. and Couttet would have held themselves and him with the most perfect ease, however wild a tumble he might have made. This would have relieved him immensely on the Mur de la Côte, but still he repeated that there was more to face than he had expected,—not of fatigue, but of apparent danger,—on the Mur and on the descent to the Plateau. Then it was confessed by the guides that many Herrs require a hand, and two hands, at every trying place; require also that their feet be guided and held; pray constantly that they may be taken back, and in descending, are shunted down the worst slopes like logs of wood possessed;—indeed, guides are in the habit of saying that they would much rather take up a log of wood of equal weight than many a Herr who has “successfully made the ascent.” One illustrious Alpine traveller's name was especially taken in vain.

The second party had meanwhile come down, and had already got a long start from the Plateau, so the four in the rope, with the grieslicher Herr unattached, went off at a great pace down the slopes of softened snow. As they got lower and lower on the mountain they sank lower and lower in the snow, and, for a long way, well above the knees was little more than an average depth. Their theory and practice was that they stopped for nothing; and so when one of the four stuck fast or fell, he was constrained to do the impossible, and head and arms and legs became for a while a spasmodic chaos, which turned out feet downwards and face foremost, with mechanical legs, some yards in advance of the chaos point. Farther down still, the passage of soft snow-bridges over the crevasses became more or less hazardous, and the grieslicher Herr was persuaded to lay a hand on the rope. Here, moreover, they found the other party, and taking the lead, they soon reached the Grands Mulets, and packed and started for Chamonix.

Once across the last snow, and down and across the Glacier des

Boissons, they ran at such a break-neck pace down the remaining part of the descent that they "did" the watchful authorities, and reached Chamonix before any one knew they were within an hour of the place, much to the disappointment of that excited town. The waiter at the door of the Royal was the first to see them, and he bolted like a rabbit with a ferret behind to order the cannon, but they triumphantly achieved their rooms before the salute was heard. From the Grands Mulets to the summit had been six hours and a half, to the Grands Mulets again three and a half—for the state of the snow did not allow a glissade—and to Chamonix well under three.

Next day they got certificates from the *chef-guide*. These documents stated that they had made the ascent, accompanied by so-and-so—*tous guides effectifs de la Société des Guides de Chamonix*. Considering the illegal obstructiveness of the *chef* in the matter of the porter, G. pointed out to him carefully the ludicrous falseness of this clause, thereby congealing that evaded functionary, polite, and stern, and vertical even in defeat.

On the back of the certificate a list of ascents down to 1855 is given. An early acquaintance will scarcely know himself as N. B. Richowor, and what English gentleman may be represented by Athbrun and Alpedecolatt, and Honourable Jackeville, it is difficult to say. Enslechnwom, Anglais, is said to have made the ascent on Aug. 16, 1854, and a like feat would seem to have been performed on Aug. 18, 1855, by M. K. G. Eirslacchnd-zous, Anglais also.

To Spring.

SEASON of youth and song and sunny mirth,
 On scented zephyrs borne with fluttering wing,
 Again thou com'st to rouse the slumbering earth,
 O'er wood and mead and hill thy charms to fling,
 Fresh songs to wake, old joys anew to bring,
 And bid thy dear delights attend thee here,
 Sweetest of Seasons! happy, soft-eyed Spring,
 First daughter of the new awakening year,
 Like Phoenix rising from cold winter's bier.

We hear thee laughing as thou passest by,
 Kissing to life young leaves of budding trees,
 In woods and meadows making melody
 With song of birds, and murmuring hum of bees,
 And rippling stream, and ever restless breeze,
 Unwearied ever, in the green glades playing
 Through aspen leaves, whose whisperings never cease.
 Thus comest thou, sweet Spring, too long delaying,
 Fresh joy and life to withered earth conveying.

Primroses star-like twinkle in the brakes,
 Violets blossom in luxuriance rare,
 The chestnut flower lets fall its snow-white-flakes,
 Green leas are pied with daisies: everywhere
 Nature rejoicing shows an aspect fair,
 Warmed by thy suns, and watered by thy showers;
 Delicious perfumes load the scented air,
 And in the woods, soft-carpeted with flowers,
 Low-bending branches form sweet fairy bowers.

Come, beauteous Spring! with knee-deep meadow-sweet
 Clothing our fields. Increase the budding more,
 Streak the long furrows with green lines of wheat,
 Bring brightest flowers from out thy choicest store,
 On thyme-set banks for bees rich honey pour,
 On orchard trees hang blossoms numberless,
 That we, when Autumn on the granary floor
 Heaps up her gifts in happy plenteousness,
 May own thy bounty in her fruitfulness.

Thomas Warton.

It is now more than a century since the occupant of many a parsonage house scattered here and there throughout England and Wales was first cheered by the appearance at his gate of one who must have been there, as elsewhere, an honoured and a welcome guest. He would be especially honoured by a brother clergyman, because he was widely known as a scholar, an antiquary, and a poet; and would, moreover, be none the less welcome because he was something of a *bon vivant*, and entirely a *bon camarade*. This was the Reverend Thomas Warton, as it becomes his chronicler and kinsman to designate him, but who was much better known as plain Tom Warton to his familiars (as many in number as they were various in fortune and degree), and who was so spoken of by all the world beside. No wonder he was popular, for he was by no means a man of one idea. As college tutor he could keep even the idler students from yawning in his class-room while he held forth on the beauties of Theocritus and Homer; and he could delight his audience by the eloquence of the disquisitions which, as professor of poetry, it was his province to deliver in the schools. Then he could discourse with learning on black-letter volumes and Gothic architecture; and if on the latter topic his knowledge has been surpassed in later days, he was a man much before his own time in the love he bore to the subject, and in the zeal with which he tried to propagate a taste for its cultivation. But Warton, as we have hinted, though an antiquary and a scholar, was by no means a Dryasdust or a recluse. He passed his mornings in study or in teaching; but when he rose from table at the college-hall of Trinity, and adjourned to the common-room, he was the life and soul of the assembled fellows. Not that he was a roisterer, like the jovial clerk of Copmanhurst, though he certainly did not, in precept or practice, conform to the rules of the ascetics. To be sure, he once wrote an inscription on some hermitage which had taken his fancy, in praise of solitude, a herb diet, and "the beechen cup unstain'd with wine," &c. His father (who had also been in his day professor of poetry at Oxford) had committed himself in precisely the same manner. Neither of them of course was in earnest; and their verses accordingly relished of little else than the meagre entertainment they had made believe to eulogize. On the other hand, the "Panegyric on Oxford Ale," by the junior poet, is a very cheery performance. He drew his inspiration from the fountain he dearly loved, and his sentiments have therefore about them a lively smack of reality, a pleasant, sensuous flavour of truth. A visitor like this could indeed well reckon on the certainty of a welcome, when, at the entrance of the village, he stopped his chaise, or checked the

roadster which in those primitive days carried himself and his saddlebags, and, in answer to inquiries, was "guided to the parson's wicket." There the reception would be as cordial, though not, perhaps, as ostentatious and costly, as would greet a college fellow of some little importance in these our giddy-paced times. The entertainer and his guest had, doubtless, then, as now, a good understanding on the subject of conventional usages and manners. The household and belongings of the country clergyman of that day answered pretty much the description given of them fifty years previously by Pope in his happy imitation of Swift,—

A wife that makes conserves, a steed
That carries double when there's need;
October store, and best Virginia, &c.

Then, as to the visitor, the college fellow of the period was completely typified in Warton. He was indeed the very ideal of a member of the brotherhood among whom was to be found, to use the words he applies elsewhere,* a nice

discerning
Both of good liquor and good learning;

though of course, like the endowments of fellowships and livings, such gifts were not always proportioned alike. Of the last-named sort of "discerning" Tom Warton had an abundant share; nor was he ill-provided in respect of the other; though it does not indeed appear that he was at all given to the habit of rendering himself ebrius, or even ebriolus, as the learned Baron of Bradwardine latinizes our vernacular "drunken" or "fuddled."

He could fairly say with the baron, "No, sir: I distinguish, I discriminate; and approve of wine so far only as it maketh glad the face, or in the language of Flaccus, 'recepto amico.'" The company and conversation of a man like this were no doubt in most instances duly prized, especially by a quondam fellow-collegian, who, if he could not fully appreciate all the bookish lore with which Warton was replete, must have been glad enough, in return for university news and good-fellowship over pipe and glass, to do the honours of his parish church, and facilitate the access of his friend to any ruins or remains of antiquity in the neighbourhood. On such occasions Warton was in all his glory; and, whether alone or in company, he was equally busy and delighted. Note-book in hand, he would mark, and measure, and speculate, and admire; or, if an audience should improvise itself around him, then would he, like Captain Clutterbuck, "expatiate to their astonished minds upon crypts, and chancels, and naves, Gothic and Saxon architectures, mullions, and flying buttresses." In this way he passed the summer vacations during many years of his life; storing up facts, searching out records, consulting authorities, and noting references, all with the ultimate view of producing a complete and systematic work on the subject of Gothic architecture, the study of which he pursued up to the time of his death with a love

* "The Progress of Discontent."

which admitted of no engrossing rivalry, except in that which he bore to his brother and sister, his writing-desk, his old books, and his old college ale.

With such endearments and resources he led as happy a bachelor life as ever fell to the lot of man. Nearly up to the time of his death he enjoyed vigorous health; and though, in a letter written in his fiftieth year, he talks of being threatened with the gout, it must have promised to deal gently with him, for he begs its permission to let him "have a few gallops with the Duke of Beaufort's dogs" on his return to Oxford. We must, however, qualify a little, and allow that his love of the Muses (for that of the rest of the sex does not seem to have troubled him) became towards the latter part of his life the source of some disturbance to his repose. Just as a mother pets the least robust of her progeny, so does the poet oftentimes love the most faulty of his stanzas; and Warton, in spite of his good-nature, was galled when it reached his ears that Johnson, who really held both his talents and his friendship in the highest regard, was in the habit of quizzing some of the poetical performances which their author prized the most. This seems to be the only way of accounting for a coldness which certainly sprang up between them, and which vexed Johnson so acutely that he is said, on very excellent authority, to have shed tears on one occasion when allusion was made to the circumstance. He was, moreover, provoked to declare that Tom Warton was the only man of genius he knew who wanted a heart. "This," says a considerate critic,* "is, we think, a proof that his charge of heartlessness against Warton was exaggerated; for how can you weep for the loss of a man's friendship, who has wanted the great element of which friendship is composed?"

It must be remembered that Warton had been labouring in the composition of verse ever since he was nine years of age; some of it, too, after models for which the Doctor had a scant measure of respect—the minor poems of Milton—the older English poetry, and that which may be called Warton's own, for he was the first, says his biographer,† who applied to modern poetry the embellishment of Gothic manners and Gothic arts, the tournaments and festivals, the poetry, music, painting, and architecture of elder days. How, then, could a bard, unless his heart was made entirely of honey and butter, do otherwise than resent the disparaging criticism which eventually found its way into circulation embodied in such flouting lines as these?—

Wheresoe'er I turn my view
All is strange, yet nothing new;
Endless labour all along,
Endless labour to be wrong;

* *Life of T. Warton*, by the Rev. G. Gilfillan. Edinburgh, 1854.

† *The Poetical Works of the late Thomas Warton, B.D., together with Memoirs of his Life and Writings.* By Richard Mant, M.A. 1802.

Phrase that time hath flung away,
Uncouth words in disarray,
Trick'd in antique ruff and bonnet,
Ode, and elegy, and sonnet.

It was Warton's habit, as we have said, to make notes on all subjects of antiquarian interest of which he met with illustrations in the course of his summer excursions. These notes he kept on enlarging as opportunities occurred, until they filled eight copy-books, pretty closely written in his own very crabbed hand. They were then faithfully and more clearly transcribed by his sister, Miss Jane Warton, a lively warm-hearted body, who looked on her brothers—the laureate, and Dr. Joseph Warton, the master of Winchester College—with great affection, and on their poetry with unbounded reverence and admiration. She, too, like them, had been early inoculated with the hereditary love of rhyming, a propensity which continued to abide with her till she was past the eighty-sixth year of her age. The collection of memoranda referred to is entitled *Observations, Critical and Historical, on Churches, Monasteries, Castles, and other Monuments of Antiquity in various Counties of England and Wales*. These manuscripts, both original and transcribed, have lately come, by the decease of a near relative of Warton and himself, into the possession of the writer of this notice. The observations contained in them range over a period of fourteen years, from 1759 to 1773, the subject-matter relating to divers localities in the Southern and Midland counties of England, and the Southern parts of Wales. They are interesting, inasmuch as they not only show Warton's views, as far as he had ventured to mature them, on the subject of the different orders and periods of Gothic architecture, but exhibit the then condition of many of the buildings, military, ecclesiastical, and civil, which had thus far survived the fury of battle and of breeze, the corrosion of time, and the scandalous neglect or still more pernicious meddling of several preceding generations. Based on the information which he had thus industriously collected, it was Warton's intention to have constructed a regular history of Gothic architecture in England. This he had intimated more than once in his prefaces to various publications; but though it would appear that he had really got so far as to complete a work on the subject which was ready for the press at the time of his death, it has never seen the light, nor has its non-appearance among the papers which he left behind him been ever satisfactorily accounted for. His biographer, Bishop Mant, says, with natural partiality, that “the loss of a finished work by such a man, and on such a subject, can hardly be enough regretted, for it can hardly ever be repaired.” It is, however, somewhat to be doubted whether Warton's reputation would have been much enhanced by the preservation of this additional proof of his zeal for promoting the study of the beautiful but difficult branch of art he loved. The study of the Gothic had been long ignored. Owing to this there was a sad dearth of professional assistance to guide the amateur student in correcting the crude impressions which

a want of sound technical knowledge is apt to generate. We should have had bold speculation, ingenious theory, and unbounded enthusiasm; but it is probable that neither Warton, nor Gray, whose coeval studies were of a kindred order, would be considered authorities in our days, though they might have shone brightly among the lesser lights of their own. Nevertheless it is not easy to overrate the benefit which the taste and talents of these contemporary writers have conferred on posterity. Of course we are only coupling their names together while reflecting on the mischief they must have been the means of averting from many a country church, and beg to disclaim any intention of comparing their stature when any reference is made to a "Country Churchyard!" To be sure, till long after their time, and long into ours, the genius of churchwardenism ruled in the vestries, and presided over the destruction or defacement of much that would now be rescued from their hands. Still Gray must have done a great deal, and Warton, we have authority for asserting, did a very great deal towards arresting the progress of Vandalism, which had been so long let loose, like the "untied winds," to "fight against the churches." The venerable lady through whom his manuscript *Itinerary* has been transmitted to us could well remember having witnessed, in her early days, her uncle's self-congratulations on the subject of his efforts in that direction. He would relate with glee how often he had stopped some pursy vicar riding with his wife stuck behind him on a pillion into Oxford, or Winchester, or about any neighbourhood in which he had sojourned, and how he had scolded, and argued, and almost shed tears, rather than fail to enlist their sympathies in favour of some tomb or niche, which he had heard of as being doomed to destruction. Then again if Warton lingered, as was his wont, more than was seemly over ale and tobacco in out-of-the-way roadside inns, it was often for the purpose of converting from the error of his ways some stupid farmer, who had designs on the recumbent effigy of doughty knight, or stately dame, and was about to have it mutilated and maimed for the purpose of making more pew-room for the hoops and petticoats of his buxom daughters. In his diary there is frequent recurrence to the painful subject of dilapidation and decay. In the neighbourhood of Bury St. Edmunds he speaks of travelling over roads kept in repair with materials drawn from the remains of the Abbey founded by Canute. At Thetford, whoever wanted a cart-load of flints scrupled not to help himself from the cloisters reared by Roger Bigod. At Glastonbury there was scarce a cottage but exhibited the mullions of a Gothic window, or fragments of pillars, cognizances, coats-of-arms, and so forth. The apathy with which these acts of desecration were regarded by high and low alike grievously vexed his soul, and constantly elicited from him some act of intercession and remonstrance, which was, as we have said, often attended with most happy effect. It is then incumbent on us who are flourishing in comparative, though not yet entire, archæological security, to look back with grateful remembrance on what Warton passed his life in doing

for us in the days of our grandfathers. With his pen he laboured to turn into a right channel the thoughts of those whose notions about objects of antiquarian interest were crude and undefined, or who considered the study of them to be, at best, repulsive and dry. These he taught to think as he thought himself, and as he gracefully expressed himself in verse—

Nor rough nor barren are the winding ways
Of hoar Antiquity, but strewn with flowers.

But he did more than this: he rescued in numberless instances the objects themselves from the rude hands of ignorance and mischief, and by his personal intervention caused them to be preserved till the time should come when the many, as well as the few, should understand and appreciate them. While, however, Warton was gradually collecting materials for a work, which, as the event proved, was never destined to reach completion, he was actively employed in literary undertakings of many sorts, which bore fruit, sooner or later, each after its kind. During the greater part of this period he continued to enjoy the uninterrupted friendship of Johnson, in whose behalf he had busied himself among the university authorities to procure the degree of M.A., which Johnson wished to see attached to his name on the title-page of his forthcoming Dictionary. While this matter was still pending, Johnson had passed five weeks at Oxford in the constant society of Warton, who furnished the particulars of sundry walks, talks, and "Why, no, sirs," which appear in Boswell's book. In one of their strolls they visited the ruins of Oseney Abbey, the desolation of which suggests a passage of pathetic lament in Warton's MS. Itinerary, and gave occasion to the Rambler for the venting of his wrath on reformers of all sorts. Johnson encouraged his friend in most of his literary enterprises; asked for, and accepted papers for the *Idler* and *Adventurer*, and notes for his edition of Shakspeare; and, referring to Warton's "Observations on Spenser," said, "You have shown to all who shall hereafter attempt the study of our ancient authors, the way to success by directing them to the perusal of the books which those authors have read," &c. Warton carried his critical knowledge of Old English writers into the Chatterton controversy, and assisted in demolishing the claims of the Rowley poems to be considered genuine. He edited, with notes, the minor poems of Milton, and illustrated with historical learning the annals of his little parish of Kiddington. He tried his hand likewise at biography, and did as much as the sterile nature of the subject would permit for the characters of Sir Thomas Pope, the founder of his college, and Ralph Bathurst, one of its principal benefactors. The classics too came in for no small share of his attention, as was made manifest in his annotated edition of Theocritus, his selections of Greek and Latin inscriptions, and other pieces, evincing a great deal of good scholarship, and an expenditure of labour rarely indulged in by those who are not driven to exertion by the stimulus of need. With regard to the great bulk of Warton's poetical

writings we may say of him, as of any other author, in the words of Shakspeare, somewhat rudely transposed and adapted,

The good things that men write live after them,
The trash lies fast interred with their bones.

Yet it is sometimes an agreeable relaxation to look over samples of literature which must be classed in the latter category, but which nevertheless brought in their day respect and consideration to the authors who produced, and gave, we must suppose, pleasure to the generation that perused and applauded them. If the reader's mind should haply be in the right vein, he may find much amusement even in a batch of odes written by a poet laureate to celebrate the yearly returning occasion of a royal birthday. It is really a curious experiment to subject one of these inflated productions to the slightest critical pressure, and mark how the process results in reducing it to a complete state of exhaustion and collapse. Tested in this way Warton's annual effusions fare ill indeed. They show that George III. was as ill-used a monarch as most of his predecessors. Here is an example. In the summer of 1790 the Court had given out that it was meditating a trip to some watering-place. Accordingly the Muse is summoned, and, being put to the question, has to declare

Within what fountain's craggy cell
Delights the Goddess Health to dwell?

Is it at Matlock?

Where from the rigid roof distils
Her richest stream in steely rills?—

or at the Bristol Hot-wells? Or is it at Bath that she

broods with watchful wing
O'er ancient Bladud's mystic spring?

or at Malvern? or at Buxton? No; at none of these. Weymouth is her chosen abode; and to Weymouth their Majesties decide to go, the goddess pointing out the way; for

Lo, amid the watery roar
In Thetis' car she skims the shore:
Where Portland's brows, embattled high
With rocks, in rugged majesty,
Frown o'er the billows, and the storm restrain,
She beckons Britain's sceptred pair
The treasures of the deep to share, &c.

But the privilege of berhyming the throne was not then confined to the official pen. Till late in the last century, on most great public occasions, verses, in the way of condolence, congratulation, &c., were made by the universities, and dutifully forwarded to St. James's. Of course, on the occasion of the King's marriage in 1761, Oxford had come out in great force, Warton, then Professor of Poetry, leading the way. Having

referred to the "Chaplet" which the tuneful dons were weaving among the domes where, as he says, "Science sits enshrined in roofs sublime," the laureate goes on to invite the Queen to Oxford in the following strains:—

Thither, if haply some distinguished flower,
Of these mixed blooms from that ambrosial bower
Might catch thy glance, and rich in nature's hue,
Entwine thy diadem with honour due—
If seemly gifts the train of Phœbus pay,
To deck imperial Hymen's festive day,
Thither thyself shall haste, and mildly deign
To tread with nymph-like step the conscious plain,
Pleased in the Muses' nook with decent pride
To throw the sceptred pall of state aside;
Nor from the shade shall George be long away,
That claims Charlotta's love, and courts her stay, &c.

One would suppose that royal people must have thought the university big-wigs were making game of them. Well might Peter Pindar exclaim, as he did on an after occasion,—

But tell me, Thomas Warton, without joking,
Art thou, or art thou *not*, thy sov'reign smoking?

But no. His was the established style of bards in those days. It is, however, unjust to an author to dwell on the worst only of his productions. Warton was capable of better things than the spreading of "court-plasters; the stringing together of laudatory couplets, to be chanted and recitivated, as was the etiquette on a birthday, for the edification of pages, maids of honour, and gentlemen pensioners."* The most laboured of his compositions betray, no doubt, more of reading than of originality; yet there is a certain merit about his best which could gain favour with Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, and other critics of mark. Of these pieces his ode entitled "The Suicide" is the best. "The Grave of King Arthur" and "The Crusade" have a sort of stirring resonance about them, which awakens feelings and longings that impel the reader at once to a reperusal of "The Talisman" and "Ivanhoe." In truth, the ear of Scott was early set a-tingling by these very effusions of the Gothic muse, detached fragments of which have the honour of appearing as the headings of some of the chapters in his novels. Many of Warton's humorous pieces are extremely amusing—"The Castle Barber's Soliloquy," "The Prologue on the Old Winchester Playhouse, over the Butchers' Shambles," "The Progress of Discontent." Warton's fame, however, rests most solidly on his "History of English Poetry," a work exhibiting not only very great labour and research, but much elegant scholarship, and a mind which, if incapable of producing a great poem, was in itself essentially poetical. "No man," says a Quarterly Reviewer, "could in Warton's time have produced such poems as he did, unless his studies

* Duke of Buccleugh's Letter on the Laureateship in Lockhart's *Life of Scott*.

had qualified him to become the historian of English poetry; nor could any one have composed that history unless he had been born a poet." *

Such are the claims which Tom Warton is entitled to hold on our affectionate remembrance and regard. The rector, while he animates his parishioners into zeal for getting rid of the whitewash that for three centuries has accumulated on the walls and pillars of their church, may often think of him with gratitude when he finds in good preservation a brass or marble effigy, which, but for Warton's earnest entreaties, would long ago have found its way to the shop of the marine-store dealer, or the mason's yard.

Warton has been recorded by those who knew him to have been good-looking in his youth, but latterly to have become a thick, squat little man, with a beaming face, and a hurried, voluble manner of speaking, which Dr. Johnson likened to the gobble of a turkey-cock. His bob-wig, which is comely enough in Reynolds's portrait of him, now suspended in the Hall of Trinity, was not always so neatly adjusted; and he was altogether so careless about the appearance of his outward man, that on one occasion he was on the point of being excluded from the king's presence by the attendant beef-eaters, when his Majesty recognized his faithful Laureate by a certain hasty spasmodic trick of mumbling, together with two or three apt quotations from Virgil. Like Johnson, the historian of English poetry had more than a sneaking belief in ghosts. As, however, these airy nothings did not suffice to gratify the longings of one who was a professed and inveterate lover of "sights," he never failed to patronize every wild Indian, learned pig, mermaid, or sea-serpent which the enterprise and ingenuity of the showman brought within his reach. In this he resembled his predecessor in the Camden professorship of history—our grand expounder of international law—Lord Stowell. To be sure, we do not hear of that great judge having allowed himself to be so far beguiled by a restless curiosity as Warton, who carried his love of drumming, trumpeting, and running after all exhibitions, both martial and civil, to a passionate excess; never failing in attendance on any popular gathering, whether convoked by a field-preaching, a review, a street conjuror, or even an execution. Indeed, it is averred that on one occasion he was known to have stood among the crowd at the foot of the scaffold, disguised in the smock-frock of a carter, for the purpose of avoiding recognition. It must have been the prevalence of these tastes which created the current impression of Warton having been, with all his acquirements, a lazy, desultory man. In Greene's Diary we read, "The prodigious extent and depth of Warton's researches astonish me the more, as I have been told by a brother collegian who knew him well, that he was a lounge and idler in the morning, willing to execute any undergraduate's thesis to entice him to fishing and badger-hunting." This, however, was not the case. He reconciled the enjoyment of a

* *Quarterly Review*, No. XXXI. Art.: *Hayley's Life and Writings*.

certain portion of leisure with a great deal of employment by the habit of rising moderately early in the morning. He was thus enabled to sustain the character of a smoker, punster, and what is now called a "muscular Christian," while engaged on a work, to gather the materials for which was the labour of an average lifetime: a work which, with all its shortcomings, must still be held as one of great literary value. As Byron declares of himself in *Beppo*, it may certainly be predicated of Warton that he

Had no objection to a pot of beer,

and would not seldom prefer quietly "bemusing" himself therein over a pipe, to joining in the drinking-bouts which were too much the fashion at college and elsewhere. But if in the *Allegro* aspect of life Warton admired the robust charms somewhat more than would be pleasing to modern refinement, he had a sincere and unaffected love of the *Penseroso* likewise. Hour after hour he would pass ecstatically fondling the quaint old volumes in the Bodleian; and the aisles and cloisters of an old abbey church were to him as an earthly paradise. Neither would a coursing-match, nay, not even the boisterous attractions of a rat-hunt, allure him from his place in the college chapel or cathedral, when the bell announced that choral service was about to begin. In this he joined heart and soul, never failing to renew daily those feelings which he had begun to realize and to write about while still a mere schoolboy; and which he cherished through all the phases of a bustling, a studious, a contemplative career.

Many odd stories about Warton are current in his family yet—how fond he was of giving clandestine help to the Winchester boys in their tasks, and joining in their noisy fun; how he once had to fly from the approach of Dr. Warton, whose nose had guided him to the scene of some contraband cookery in which his brother was assisting the youngsters; and how the astonished doctor dragged him from his hiding-place into light. Then there is another anecdote which Mant relates. The doctor had received an exercise from a lad which he thought much too good for him; and suspecting the truth, ordered him into his study after school, and sent for the Poet Laureate. When the exercise had been read: "Don't you think," said the doctor, "that it is well worth half-a-crown?" Warton assented. "Then," said the doctor, "you shall give the boy one."

Such were the tales that added cheerfulness to the crackle of the nightly faggot which blazed in the dormitories of old Winchester College, when Howley was a studious youth and a great favourite with his master; and when the frolics of Sydney Smith provoked the future archbishop to take a flying shot at his head with a chessboard. One by one the contemporary chroniclers of these legends have been passing away; their children and grandchildren have succeeded them, and it is doubtful whether there remains extant, at the time we are penning these lines, one single individual who remembers the Wartons.

Ralph Grueby's Ghost.

To Mr. ANDREW WYBROW, *Theberton Crossways, Fenshire.*

Elm-tree Court, Temple, 15th August, 1764.

DEAR SIR,—I am to inform you, that by the will of Miss Sybilla Grueby, late of Grueby Grange, Fenshire, deceased, you are constituted sole legatee of the demesnes of Grueby, with the lands, mansion-house, buildings, and all other hereditaments thereto belonging. The said will lies in our office ready for proving whenever it may suit your convenience to come to town. And we would respectfully suggest that an early day be named for that purpose, there being some particulars connected with the said demise of which we have it in charge to make you acquainted. Having been honoured with the confidence of the late owners of Grueby through several generations, we trust to be permitted to continue our services to yourself in the same capacity, and are, dear sir, yours faithfully,

JOSEN and JOSENS,

By PHIL. POUNCET.

"What be a legatee, wife?" asked old Andrew Wybrow, as his dame, having spelled through the foregoing letter, took off her spectacles and rubbed them with a puzzled air.

"I ben't quite clear, master; but I've an idee it has somthin' to do wi' property."

"Little good ever come to *uz* in that shape, dame; and I don't like the sound on it now; we may get into troubles likes. Best take th' letter to lawyer Jonas; he'll tell *uz* all about it."

Lawyer Jonas had no difficulty in telling them all about it, so far as the obvious meaning of the communication went; but a considerable deal in reassuring old Andrew that there was nothing on the face of it to be alarmed at. But the lawyer's perplexity to make out the mystery beneath, probably exceeded his client's, in the same degree that his capacity to appreciate the importance of the intelligence conveyed did. Andrew was not able to afford him much help towards an elucidation. Even the name of the testator was strange to him, and in the mill-horse round of an uneventful life, he could recall no incident which the lawyer's ingenuity was able to twist into a passable bearing. The nearest approach to a relevant fact, which a pretty close examination brought out, did not amount to much; fell very far short, indeed, of solving the mystery. It was simply this: Andrew remembered once—a long many years ago it was, he knew—that he was bothered a good deal by two or three strange ladies, who one day called him from his work to ask questions about where he was christened, and where his father was buried, and most about the old tombstones in Theberton churchyard; but he soon turned 'em over to the sexton. "They war the very curiousest old ladies *I* ever see, and that's saying a good deal!" concluded old Andrew.

Mr. Jonas, making allowance for the reputed curiosity of the sex, even that particular portion of it designated by Mr. Wybrow, still thought there remained something over to be carried to a special account in such very particular inquiries about a man who must, even at that period, have left his *beaux jours* so far behind as old Andrew. Yet, straining and stretching, with all a lawyer's capacity at legal tension, this scrap of evidence, it went but a very short way towards fathoming the mystery. He was obliged reluctantly to admit *that* still lay beyond the reach of the legal plummet.

On the apprehensive devisee presenting himself, as invited, at the offices of Messrs. Josen and Josens, attended by Mr. Jonas, whose company he insisted on having, those gentlemen fulfilled their promise in communicating the particulars referred to in their letter. To say that they succeeded in making either Andrew or his legal *adlatus* comprehend them, would perhaps be saying too much. Luckily they did not hold that to be strictly a part of their duty. The particulars so communicated were some of them of a nature singular enough to excuse even the astute intellect of Mr. Jonas for finding a difficulty in grasping them. Such form the basis of the following relation; the business-like brevity into which the Temple lawyers compressed it being amplified in some points, and supplemented by some others that were never in their possession.

A century ago there stood in what was then one of the least accessible districts of Fenshire, a long low red-brick structure of the baldest kind of English domestic architecture which preceded that known as Elizabethan. Devoid of parapet, or gables, or embayed windows, or mullioned doorways to give variety and dignity to the façade, its two long rows of narrow casements blinked upon the bleak north with a hard, uncompromising air, in which pride struggled with asceticism. Why it had not faced about to the south, where a cheerful landscape awaited its regards, was a marvel to every chance traveller through the out-of-the-way neighbourhood in which it stood. It appeared altogether such a piece of wrong-headedness, and its morose face wore such an air of consciousness of having made a grand mistake in life, as to suggest the idea that it had turned its back on the sun in some perverse fit during its growing stage, and done penance in a wintery and misanthropic existence ever since. As if expressly to countenance this notion, the area upon which it looked, instead of being a compound of verdant turf and variegated parterre, such as constituted the plaisance of the old country mansion of the period, was a broad flag-stoned court, stretching down to a sunk ha-ha, surmounted by sturdy posts and swagging chains, which formed its boundary from the highway. A grim conventual-looking courtyard, with no other relief to the monotony of its aspect than a characteristic sun-dial, stone-mounted, which itself had been so perversely placed as to be precluded from catching a smile from its god during six months out of the twelve; an outrage for which it avenged itself in the cynically abandoned motto—REGARDLESS OF THE HOURS.

In the rear of the building lay a capacious vegetable garden, by much

the most cheerful feature it had to offer, and that apparently not an original appendage, but subsequently carved out of a weedy plantation which surrounded it on three sides. This, with the exception of an outer belt of sombre firs, was monopolized by brambles, nettles, and similar rude growths of nature, thrusting up their heads high above the few shrubs left of its original stock, as though to assert a prior claim to what air and sunshine might penetrate the grim cordon that surrounded them. A perfect paradise for small birds, snakes, hedgehogs, and much burrowing vermin, but in the human estimate, regarded with a view either to ornament or utility, a wilderness.

Such were a few of the more obvious among the external features of Grueby Grange. A modern auctioneer even might have experienced a difficulty to make them attractive upon paper. That it should never have entered into the minds of any in the long line of possessors of the Grange to pull it down and substitute a structure more consonant with the received ideas of the beautiful, even if it were only to take the perverse twist out of the old house, is scarcely conceivable. But it was obscurely hinted that some obstacle existed to such a procedure. It might have been nothing more than the menace darkly conveyed in a rude rhyme carved on the oaken lintel over the great door, which tradition stated had been placed there by the founder of the Grange for a warning to his posterity. The figure of a huge rose appeared cut upon the beam; a device which might have been thought to bear some reference to the cognizance of the founder's royal chief, who united in himself the rival roses of English faction, but for some apparent allusion to it in the verse beneath, which was difficult to reconcile with such a supposition. If the flower was designed to be taken in its ancient symbolism, then the sibylline obscurity of the rhyme was only made the more impenetrable by it. Thus ran the legend:—

Whiles . ther . bee . Grubys . ynn . y^e . londe .
 Zetten . Grubys . rose . ystonde .
 Gif . ytt . bee . plucked . bye . Grubys . honde .
 Wt . honde . shal . pluck . upp . hous . ande . londe ,

Possibly this was sufficiently sinister and obscure to influence the generations proximate to its contriver, if the later ones may be supposed to have held it in no great reverence; and among the latter there may have happened to be no Florio in the line to whom the demon whispered, "Have a taste."

Interiorly, the Grange did not belie its outward promise. The exigencies of successive generations had necessarily produced some modifications of the original plan, but in the main it was unchanged. The apartments were for the most part long narrow chambers of low pitch, ill-lighted by the casements of boreal aspect when the day was at its prime, but especially gloomy in the candlelight, harbouring shadows at their remote ends, like the black noiseless wings of night-birds perpetually

hovering. If the muser who sat down beneath them with his thoughts for sole companions, chanced to have any cares in his horizon, however remote, he was liable to be impressed ominously by these brooding wings, as the misgiving traveller is by vultures in the distant sky when he feels by anticipation their beaks in his heart.

The furniture at the period this narrative has reference to, was of the stately but comfortless character proper to a generation which never relaxed a muscle except in sleep, and then hearsed itself in draperies to screen from waking eyes the shocking liberties that audacious leveller took with dignity and deportment. Chairs with stark upright backs, adapted only to self-supporting spines, and tables that took ample precautions against any approach to familiarity or ease, by an under-framing which kept the sitter at arms' length, were fair exponents of the prevailing character of the moveables, or immoveables as they might rather be called. Even the more volatile members of the household—the hangings and coverings of needlework—bore evidence that not the elegant tastes of the sex could withstand the *genius loci*; for the subjects chosen for illustration by the graceful needle were of the grimmest supplied by the range of sacred and profane history: "Jephtha's Vow," and the "Stabbing of Ethelred while draining the grace-cup," and such-like cheerful episodes in the great epic of humanity. Dark cabinets were there in plenty, as there always is wherever the vicissitudes of a long succession of generations concentrate, seeming to hint at mysteries nothing should ever induce them to divulge; and mirrors which made pretence of spreading a cloudy curtain in their depths, which needed only to be drawn aside to reveal futurity. Ancient mirrors everywhere grow to have a wizard aspect—probably from the strange secrets that are bared to them; but these added the austerity of seclusion to the experience of length of days. For during the century, or century and a half, or two centuries—a few decades do not count for much in such a span—that they had been immured in the Grange, no sunbeam had ever glinted on their faces; and they declared the fact as plainly as a human face might that had lived to be a hundred, *and never seen a smile!*

The Grange was not free from the tendency commonly charged upon structures of its order and age—for branching out into long passages leading nowhere; but in it, the impulse had expended itself in the production of one long gallery, running from end to end of the upper of its two floors: not a mere passage such as a modern architect might have thrown in to satisfy chambermaid exigencies, but a liberal thoroughfare, along which a handsome equipage might have been driven—and turned again, if the team were well in hand. Confessedly, this capaciousness was not without a few drawbacks. The place was generally gusty with draughts from the numerous doors opening on to it, which were apt to puff out bed-going candles and startle their bearers with sounds like long-drawn sighs: altogether a cold-catching, rheumatism-giving promenade, and, speaking salubriously, good for nothing but ghosts to stalk

in. Nor was it to be expected that such uncommonly eligible quarters for that fraternity should be left to the sole occupancy of material tenants. Already, in the first half of the last century, what with the demolitions of improvement, and the absorptions of spare rooms by the increase of population, that dignified seclusion that delighteth the ghostly taste was growing almost as difficult to find as reasonably rented *appartements* in the capital of his Imperial Majesty of France, in the second half of the present one. A commodious domicile like Grueby Grange was not, therefore, likely to remain unappropriated by that class to whom "rent is no consideration."

But there was room under its roof for a co-tenancy of spirituals and corporeals without either getting much in the other's way; more especially as it chanced that the habits of the respective parties were not likely to clash. The family was a quiet one, and kept early hours, and it may be assumed that the ghosts, according to their prevailing habits, were likely to be quiet too, and to keep early hours also, after their way: only *their* meridian falling at midnight, 10 P.M. mortal reckoning might be considered the very earliest hour at which the world was sufficiently aired for ghosts of condition to walk abroad. Occasionally an early riser among them would cross a belated domestic on her way to bed; but on such rare occurrences the ghost seemed fully as much scared as the mortal; for by the time the latter had put a climax to her terror by dropping her candle, and screamed, and brought the whole household to their respective doors in very strange head-gear, and very scant nether garments, the object of the alarm was nowhere—or at least not *there*. So, on the whole, the parties agreed fully as well as in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred of joint occupancy, where they are tied down and held to good behaviour by covenant and agreement.

The family at the Grange, which assumed to be "of that ilk," dated from an ancestor who bore bow and bill in the ranks of Henry of Richmond, on Bosworth field, and was—so the traditions in the family went—for notable service there, rewarded on the spot by a gift of the estate of Grueby, whose owner had also fought and fallen on that field, but on the wrong, that is the vanquished, side. A portrait of the Bosworth billman hung at the stair-head—the picture of a dour man in middle life, awesome to look upon, from a certain wicked cunning the painter had contrived to throw into the eyes, intensified by an arrangement familiar to us in masters of the Venetian school, of bringing the face into a strong light, while the outlines of the person are swallowed up in gloom. The portrait of Ralph Grueby was a notable specimen of this trick of art—a face looking out of a black cloud. The effect was enough to startle any one coming upon it unawares, and even the domestics at the Grange, to whom custom had familiarized it, never cared to linger within the range of its wicked eyes.

The representatives of this grim stock had dwindled down to three sisters, of whom the elder two had arrived at the stage where the seal is

set upon the lot of single blessedness, and neither might any longer be expected to give an heir to the Grange. Their opportunities had lapsed while the grey old sun-dial out in the forecourt had been holding true to its abandoned motto, for they, like it, had been "regardless of the hours" till the sun had declined and left them in unbroken shade. Wooers in plenty had found their way to the Grange in the period when such gauds were seasonable—for when had the heiress of broad acres to sit and sigh forth the ancient maiden's lament, "Heigho! for a husband!"?—but somehow the wooings had not sped. Without any heart-breakings, or even violent strainings of the tender chord, early ardours insensibly cooled down to a platonic temperature, and left behind only pensive memories for the lavendered cabinets of the Grueby ladies; whence they were duly taken out and aired in fitting moods and seasons, with an interest which had nothing more mournful about it than appertains to everything of the past.

In effect these two elderly ladies had declined into that half-dreamy existence, which imperceptibly comes over such as have few external relations with the present, but many memories in the past. This state naturally disposed them to entertain some of those minor superstitions, which in their day were held not unbecoming maiden gentlewomen, who, to use an euphemism, could no longer be called "young." They detected coffins in the fire, and winding-sheets in the candle, and strangers in the tea-cup, and nursed their little prejudices against unlucky days. The spilling of salt was a thing to avoid, and the crossing of knife-blades, and a host of such harmless fancies. And probably no inducement within the compass of mortals to offer, would have prevailed on them to sit down thirteen at table. But as touching the stories of ghosts at the Grange, they set their faces against them, out of a regard for the reputation of their progenitors. They considered that it could be none but "troubled" spirits who were affected with peripatetic propensities, and therefore it would be a sort of reflection on their own blood to admit the possibility of any of their ancestors being so afflicted. The eldest Miss Grueby, especially, met any hint of the kind ventured on by the domestics with a severe rebuke; which was followed up by assembling the entire household, immediately before going to bed, in the oak parlour, and there, under the hovering wings of the night-birds, reading aloud a certain chapter which recounts the unhallowed doings of a woman of En-dor; appending as an unauthorized gloss upon the text the observation that they who saw spirits must be as wicked as they who raised them. It is not surprising that discipline such as this should nip many a promising ghost-story in the bud, and if it did not prevent the ghosts from walking, at least dispose those who chanced to encounter them to keep their own counsel.

Besides, the stories were chiefly legendary—bequests from generations blessed with a sharper vision and a robuster faith than the present. The one that took the most definite shape related to the original of the por-

trait on the stair, Grim Ralph, as was his traditional appellation. Darkly the legend ran, that the spirit of Ralph was burdened with a secret which must be made known to the last of his race, under penalty of eternal unrest for himself; and not to let the all-important opportunity slip by, he made a visit of observation once at least in each generation,—appeared to some one or more members of the family in the oak parlour,—apparently satisfied himself that the hour had not struck, and vanished without making any sign. What degree of credence the members of the family in the present generation gave to this legend was not known: it might be that the Grueby ladies carried misdoubtings under that mask from which some of us borrow a braver face for the world than our closet mirror has to show us; but it was certain that spiritual visitants could count upon no open welcome from the principals of the Grange, had it entered any of their noddles to favour them with a call.

But besides these two ancient maidens there was a third sister, the child of another mother, and nearly a score of years the junior of the elder ladies; between whom and her the contrast was not less in person than in years, the difference mainly consisting in her greater resemblance to their common ancestor, Ralph. The features depicted on the canvas were strikingly reproduced in Sybilla Grueby; the same type, though moulded to a softer expression by sex, with the baleful light, which made the eyes of the portrait terrible, subdued to a lambent flame in their living counterparts. In her their depths were serene,—though it was the serenity of August skies, which the tempest can momentarily darken as it never does the firmament where flitting clouds make perpetual menace of fainter overshadowings. No casual observer could doubt that the elements of passion lay locked under the somewhat passive exterior: no one intimately acquainted with the character of Sybilla Grueby could conceive that the master passion would ever languish into sentiment in her, as it had in her two elder sisters.

Great therefore were the surprise and gossip of the neighbourhood, and unbounded the astonishment of Sybilla's accepted lover, when on her recovery from a sharp but short illness she informed that gentleman, kindly but firmly, that their engagement must terminate. Remonstrance and entreaty alike failed to shake this determination, though she received both in a subdued, and even humble spirit, which seemed scarcely consonant with her temperament. But on her refusing to give a reason for her conduct, indignation, not unnaturally, drove all other sentiments out of her ill-used lover's breast. He abruptly quitted her and the neighbourhood, and ultimately the country; and for years nothing more was heard of him at the Grange.

It did not pass unnoticed, that Sybilla's sisters refused to join in the efforts made to combat what appeared her causeless caprice; though it was no secret that the hopes which each had severally resigned for herself had devolved upon her, and their disappointment at their frustration was likely to be only less great than that of the discarded lover's. On the contrary, they treated her with the tenderness they might have evinced, had she been the victim of another's caprice instead of the sacrifice of

her own. And all their tenderness was needed, as soon grew painfully apparent. Sybilla's clouded spirit and altered manner bore testimony that, whatever the source of her strange resolves, changed affection for the object she had banished was not it. Her tall form drooped, her fine features grew sharp, and her manner, which had before been suave and equable, became uneven and petulant. She aged so rapidly that a very few years sufficed to make the difference in that respect between herself and her sisters scarcely distinguishable. Blight did all the work of time, and at a far more rapid pace. Meanwhile, time, neither to be hastened nor stayed at the instance of the happy or the unhappy, continued to cast his shadows over the Grange, while three aged women wore away an unenjoying and monotonous existence there.

Upon that stagnation of life one day broke in an incident disturbing, as a dropped stone the scum that gathers on the surface of a pool, the torpor which during fifteen years had been settling down upon that isolated household. A strange visitor of foreign aspect presented himself at the Grange, on the plea of urgent business with the younger Miss Grueby. He was received by the three sisters in company, and, after the first general salutation, turned with much seeming perplexity from one to another, as if in doubt to which his errand specially lay. This uncertainty was presently relieved by an exclamation from one of them: "Reginald!"

"Sybil! is it possible, so changed?"

"Changed indeed, since *you* fail to recognize me," she replied, though her own recognition of her former lover, under the changes wrought by time and travel, had only been worked out by close and continuous scrutiny from the moment of his entrance.

"Sybil!" he resumed, after the first emotions of surprise had subsided, "I do not come to reproach you with my wasted years: had I cherished such a purpose, what I now see must have put it to flight. But I have suffered, too, and my presence here is evidence that the wound has not closed in me any more than in yourself. I come to make a request, which I think you will not now refuse to grant. Tell me, why was our engagement broken?"

"The time is past, and the circumstances are changed," she replied, "that made me keep it from you. You have dearly earned the right to know, and you shall."

The communication Sybilla made in the diffuse manner almost universally characterizing the relation of events occurring to the narrator, may be more succinctly put in the third person.

"YOU ARE WAITED FOR IN THE OAK PARLOUR!"

Sharp and distinct like the tones of a bell, these words sounded in Sybilla Grueby's ear, as starting up from a midnight sleep she hastily put aside the curtain and looked forth into the dim lamp-lit chamber to discover the speaker.

In vain. There was no one to be seen: whoever had been the bearer

of the message must have left the room immediately on delivering it, for the sound had scarce died on her ear before her hand had thrust aside the curtains and her eye been disappointed in its search. Surprised at this, and, moreover, disturbed at the singularity of the summons at such an hour, Sybil hastily arose, and throwing on a chamber robe, took up the lamp and went out into the gallery. There her ear was instantly assailed by those low sobs and moans which seldom intermitted at night, on that battle-field of conflicting air-currents; but such sounds were too familiar to her to attract attention, though she fancied she caught amongst them the tones of a human voice, the sole indication that any of the household besides herself was astir. At the staircase a stronger gust made the flame of her lamp flicker up, and cast a bright glimmer over the painting which caught Sybil's passing glance. It was but a momentary one, yet it made her start and rub her eyes, for it seemed to her that the features of Ralph had vanished from the canvas; one uniform cloud of blackness appeared to cover the entire surface. Probably the paramount curiosity to learn who awaited her below prevented Sybil's stopping to convince herself that this was an illusion, for, though wondering, she did not arrest her steps, but pressed on to the place of rendezvous.

Her first impression on entering the room and looking around, was one of disappointment, quickly succeeded, however, by surprise that nothing met her glance but the familiar articles of furniture standing about in such disorder as she remembered to have left them in on retiring to rest, and wearing that Merlin's-cave aspect of life arrested in full career, which pervades all familiar daylight haunts when come upon in dead of night. Under the feeble glimmer of her solitary lamp the night-birds were naturally in high feather, but beyond their restless wings the apartment showed no sign of the presence of movement since the last occupant had quitted it overnight. Then for the first time a doubt arose in Sybil's mind of the reality of her summons, which a little reflection turned into a conviction that she had suffered herself to become the dupe of a dream. The thought curled her lip with a smile as she turned to give a parting look around; but that look encountered something which caused the smile's instant subsidence into an indefinable expression pervading all her features; something which rooted her feet to the floor, and riveted her eyes upon the hearth.

Not all at once was Sybilla conscious of the nature or the form of what so fixed her attention, and inspired that feeling of which the strange expression on her countenance was the index. One moment she could almost fancy the outline of a human figure was developing out of the gloom; the next, it had vanished, and the wainscot carving that had been momentarily intercepted, showed distinctly on the same spot. Now it gathered substance and seemed acquiring the roundness of life: anon it undulated, and wavered, and finally dissipated as a column of thin vapour might which a side-breath had taken. Sybilla could not define to herself the motive which held her such a passive witness of these mutations. It was

not fear, nor scarcely curiosity, but rather the mood in which the dreamy gaze is held captive by the smoke wreaths as they go up from the hearth, and make themselves cars for the soul's fancies to mount upon, without confining within themselves the view of the passengers they carry.

But the car in which Sybilla's fancies were embarked presently imprisoned them—abstracted the view beyond, and concentrated upon itself the whole of her faculties; and precisely as the stages of this change occurred, more definite and denser grew under her eyes a shape in which she at length recognized the lineaments of her painted ancestor. And with that recognition came upon her a paralyzing dread: a desire to fly from the fearful presence; to cry aloud for help; but tongue and limbs failed her; the very sources of life seemed drying up under the eyes which glowed more and more, like igniting coals, till their blaze turned her lamp's flame to a sickly pallor, and seemed to shoot fiery arrows into her own. Half senseless she fell upon a couch, and covered her eyes with her hands, trying to think she was not mad.

Then the consciousness of those blazing orbs resting on her unseen, grew more intolerable to bear than their scathing light; and again she arose to face her dread visitant. It stood on precisely the same spot, in the same attitude of waiting, but was now beckoning her to approach. Though rebellious to her own will, her limbs seemed given over to the mastery of a stronger, for without her volition they bore her to the side of the dreaded being, and there fixed her, while it, with a touch of its shadowy hand, pressed back a panel on the chimney-breast, and drew from behind a parchment scroll. Close up under Sybilla's eyes the figure then held the instrument, and traced line by line from top to bottom with its finger, while to the stupefied gazer a maze of uncouth characters seemed to start out under the ghostly index in its progress. But the power of taking in distinct impressions was fast leaving her. With a terrible effort she forced a shriek from her lips, and on the instant the lamp fell from her hand, and a heavy sigh swept past her ear—the last sensation that gained admittance to her brain.

Slowly consciousness came back to Sybilla. A sense of chill and numbness through all her frame, and a dull ache at the brain, were her first impressions of returning life. As her senses grew capable of taking in external objects, the grey morning light showed her that she was lying before the hearth of the Oak Parlour; but how she came there, as of all the other incidents of the night, she was for the time utterly oblivious. Under a confused impression of something unusual having happened to her, she struggled to her feet, and managed to regain her chamber and throw herself on the bed, where almost immediately a heavy sleep fell upon her, as though she had drained some lethal draught.

The apartment in Grueby Grange designated the Oak Parlour, was a long chamber on the ground-floor, low of pitch, and sombre of aspect, in spite of several narrow casements with which its outer wall was pierced. This sombreness was due to the oak panelling, which encased not only the walls, but covered the ceiling as well, and which gave it its distinctive

appellation. Set in a heavy framework, to which age had given the hue of ebony, each panel bore some carved device of a grotesque mask, or flower, or arabesque scroll-work. The one which occupied the post of honour, viz. the centre of the chimney-breast, bore an exact counterpart of that device which left so much room for speculation in its connection with the legend over the entrance door. From the prominence given to the design among the ornaments of this, the state apartment of the Grange, an inference might be drawn that the builder designed to keep perpetually under the eyes of his successors a reminder of his earliest injunction—whatever that had reference to. Dragons, hippogriffs, and other strange creatures that never entered the ark of Noah, were set as a sort of guard of honour round this centre panel in all conceivable attitudes—volant, couchant, rampant, or simply regardant. Similar ones were scattered about other parts, but here they seemed massed, as at a sort of headquarters. Indeed the entire apartment bore no inconsiderable resemblance to a Brobdingnagian inversion of one of those heirloom chests which were almost invariably to be found, four or five generations back, amid the plenishing of the yeoman household, and in which the stock of homespun linen kept company with the good man's Sunday suit of blue, and the fair dame's crimson paduasoy.

In this apartment were the two elder ladies of the Grange one morning awaiting their sister to join them at the early meal.

"Look, Magdalen!" exclaimed one who had approached one of the windows. "See, the storm that shook the house so fearfully last night, and threatened to bury us all under its ruins, has made a scapegoat of the old dial." And sure enough, out in the forecourt, there lay that hoary contemner of the hours, broken at the shaft, and so cut off from all repentance for its misspent past. The incident was not without a certain suggestiveness to the on-lookers, and they both turned from its contemplation with a little shudder which told that it was not lost upon them.

"Why," exclaimed one, as her foot struck against some object on the floor, "surely this is Sybil's lamp! how came it here?"

"And she is half an hour past her time," returned the other, consulting her watch; "she must be oversleeping herself. I will go and call her, Mabel."

The sleep Sybil was found in was no light slumber to be broken by such gentle applications as usually suffice to waken the morning sleeper, and they soon desisted from the attempt; and, instead, set an anxious watch till nature itself should release her chained senses, for that she was under some abnormal condition was evident even to unpractised eyes.

When she did at length awake, it was to talk of such events as made her alarmed sisters believe her in the delirium of a fever. Vividly, as though each incident was transpiring under her eyes at the moment of relation, she described all that had befallen her through that trying night. And as the sisters listened, their first suspicion gradually gave way before the coherence of her manner, which formed so great a contrast to the matter of her discourse, and they were fain to think she had dreamt

these things, and had not yet arrived at a conviction of their unreality. But when this view was suggested to the patient, she repudiated it so earnestly, that it occurred to the others, in order to dispel such a mischievous delusion, it would be well to have the wainscoting taken down at the spot she spoke of, to demonstrate how baseless were the circumstances her fancy connected with it. In this proposal Sybil eagerly acquiesced, though with quite opposite expectations to those entertained by her sisters. No time was lost in carrying out this purpose. A workman was sent for, and under his tools the three centuries' pride of the great rose-panel fell; for the strange beasts about it suffered themselves to be despoiled of their charge as tamely as though they had been a lot of silly sheep, instead of the fierce ban-dogs they assumed to be.

The removal of the panel laid bare a small recess in the stone-work, whence, from under a thick coating of dust, the man presently drew a short cylindrical packet, the sight of which greatly agitated Sybilla, who had insisted on being present, in spite of all remonstrance. Her emotion increased when, on unrolling the packet, it proved to be a small sheet of parchment covered with writing. "I *have* looked on that before," she exclaimed, in a voice that shook with emotion. "Are you satisfied that this is something more than a dream?"

For a few minutes the influence of the strange circumstances attending the discovery of the instrument suspended curiosity to learn its purport. When they became tranquillized enough to seek to decipher the writing, they found no easy task lay before them, for not only was it traced in a cramp monkish hand, but the colour had nearly fled from the ink. Added to which, the language and orthography was not quite the vernacular of the eighteenth century. Perseverance at length surmounting these difficulties, the readers were startled at finding themselves the recipients of a direct message from an ancestor whose hand might be supposed to have crumbled into dust nearly three centuries before this missive of his fell into their hands.

Bating Chaucerian eccentricities of spelling, the following is a transcript of the terms in which the founder addressed the last of his line:—

"I, RALPH OF GRUEBY, for present ease of conscience, and future deliverance from the pains of purgatory, do make confession of wrongous seizing of the lands of Grueby from the infant heirs of Godefroi Wibrowe, who were to me left in trust. But in the interest of my liege lord Henry the King, and by indulgence of holy Church, I do purpose to hold the same for me and mine while my line shall last. But for my soul's health, as before recited, I do strictly enjoin restitution to be made to the surviving heirs, lineally descended from the said G. W., when my race has passed away: in furtherance of which meritorious intention I have caused this deed to be drawn and lodged in a sure place to secure the execution thereof: and so may the Blessed Mary and good Saint Nicolas, my patron, stand by me in the day of dolor !

(Signed) ^{his} RALPH X OF GRUEBY.
mark

Taken under seal of Confession by me,
RAYMOND,
Clerk of the Shrine of S. Nicolas.

Thus was Grueby's rose plucked, and therewith, as the legend prophesied, were plucked up house and land; for whether Grim Ralph reaped the anticipated benefits of his rather peculiar notions of meritorious restitution or no, his descendants, through whom he proposed to perform his vicarious good works, conceived that no other course was open to them but to carry out to the letter the intentions of the ancestor, who, in his own person, drove such a keen bargain for both worlds. In this conclusion Sybilla fully concurred, though feeling that all the sacrifice was really to be made by herself. They agreed that a demise, in regular form, should be made by the last survivor, of all the estates of Grueby to the discoverable heirs of G. W.; and, in pursuance of that resolution, they personally set on foot inquiries which resulted in the legateship of old Andrew, as mentioned at the opening.

But though taking conscientious precautions for securing the return of the property to the line of its original owners, until the explanation given by Sybilla to her lover, the Grueby ladies had not thought it expedient to make any confidants of the foregoing circumstances—with one exception, one whom few family secrets escape, the doctor. He being consulted in the illness that fell upon Sybilla, consequent on that shock to her system, detected a disturbance without a visible cause. Being a man of science, he had learnt that there are no such things as effects without causes, and so he put a few probing questions, which brought out the whole story.

That particular curer of bodies chanced to be one of those who do not narrow their views to their calling; and he especially prided himself on being provided with a theory to fit every possible mental phenomenon. He pho-pho'd the poor ghost as a matter of course, and admirably demonstrated that it all grew out of a derangement of the gastric functions, whereby an unhealthy excitement of the cerebral organ had been produced. Some legend had lodged itself in the brain, he said, in some by-past and forgotten time, and lain hidden till, in a restless fit, that organ set about routing out its old cupboards. Then the forgotten figment turned up in a dream as a revelation, forsooth!—a thing of every-day experience, my dear madam!—said the perfectly satisfied doctor.

Answered Miss Grueby, pertinently enough, her eyes couched by that parchment scroll;—no more talk of the doings of Her of En-dor in the Oak Parlour after that, I promise you!—"But the document, doctor, that at least was never brought out of one of those old cupboards you speak of, for there existed no legend referring to it."

The man of science shrugged his shoulders;—an infallible resource for the philosopher who accounts for everything, when confronted by a perverse fact which *won't* be accounted for. Then, when this process of inoculation for incredulity had had time to work, he glibly launched out upon remarkable coincidences, and—but upon this with more reserve, as of a thing he would by no means commit his philosophy to—of abnormal powers of perception, supposed to be evolved from certain conditions of brain. At all events, he concluded—and on his wisdom here there is not

likely to be two opinions—let the patient dismiss all thoughts of having been the subject of a supernatural visitation; take tonics, and use light diet and moderate exercise; and he would stake his professional reputation on no more being seen of the ghost—at least by Miss Sybilla.

No more *was* ever seen of the ghost; though whether that was due to the doctor's having laid it, or, having accomplished its object, it laid itself, may be an open question. The parties most concerned may have been perfectly satisfied of the correctness of the doctor's theory, and still held to their own inferences from the facts. Certain it is, that the portrait on the stair was thenceforward provided with a curtain, to the great contentment of the domestics at the Grange; and the Oak Parlour was shut up, Miss Grueby saying that her eyes were not so young as they once were, and she found the dark shade of the wainscot incommoded them.

Sybil's lover, at the end of her relation, declared himself still unable to discover the reason for her behaviour towards him.

For answer, she reminded him of the portionless condition in which the determination came to by her sisters and herself regarding the property left her; and hinted that it was because she knew that his generosity might disregard this, she shrank from making the communication. He could not but recognize the motive of her self-sacrifice, while he bitterly lamented the mistake of persisting in it till it was too late to remedy it.

It *was* too late to bring back health and youth, and the hopes that waited on these fifteen years before. Reginald departed to resume once more his wandering life; and Sybilla fell back on the stagnation that rots itself away for want of movement—diverse results of one unhappy mistake.

The sisters were gathered in due time to the company of their unquiet ancestor in the family vault, the last survivor of them happening to be Miss Sybilla. By her the property was bequeathed, as previously arranged, such explanations being made to the family lawyer as she deemed desirable to vindicate the will he was instructed to frame.

Grueby Grange was pulled down—that being a condition of the bequest—and the ploughshares of nearly a hundred springs have passed over the site since; but Ralph Grueby's ghost still has a shadowy existence in the traditions of the country people, though the part it played in determining the ownership of Grueby is forgotten. A scion of old Andrew, fifth in direct descent, and at this time a gentleman commoner of a crack college in Oxford, probably never heard of the woodman of Theberton Crossways; and if he were told, would not believe the teller. So does the whirligig of Time bring round his revenges; and so runs the world away!

Vidocq and the Sansons.

AMONG my Parisian acquaintances was M. Appert. He was the almoner to the Queen of the French. In the discharge of his duties he was brought into contact with all the vagabondism and profligacy of Paris; he was familiar with the haunts of rascaldom when out of the hands of justice, and with the most distinguished of the representatives of rascaldom when justice had seized them for its prey. In his company I visited and associated with some of the fiercest ruffians and most daring burglars of the French capital. Through him I was brought into personal contact with Sanson the executioner, and Vidocq the spy. I will record a few reminiscences connected with his name and history. I dined with him on one occasion (it was about the third of a century ago), when among the invited guests were Vidocq and the two Sansons (father and son—the headsman's office being an inheritance). Several gentlemen known in the literary world were present. In no other place than Paris could there have been such a *service de table*. And the meeting was more remarkable, as it was the first time that Sanson had ever seen the man who had furnished him with so much food for the guillotine; and it gave Vidocq the opportunity of making many inquiries as to the deportment of illustrious victims in the *moment suprême* of violent death.

Sanson the father was a man of huge size—of stature more than six feet—of a placid and serious expression of countenance. He might have passed for a country gentleman “at ease in his possessions.” I could have pointed out a “turtle-loving alderman” or two to whom he bore a resemblance. He answered every question with the greatest serenity and gravity. He called the instrument of death “la mécanique,” and in my intercourse with him I never heard the word “guillotine” or knife fall from his lips. He was disposed to be taciturn, but less so than his son, who appeared to look upon his father with a considerable amount of reverence, and took no part in the conversation except when specially addressed. The son was a man of ordinary appearance, of the common height, of a sallowy look. No one would have noticed him in a crowd. Vidocq was a short man, vivacious, vain, and talkative. He seemed to consider the interest he excited as the recognition of a claim which everybody must allow. He liked to be the narrator of his own great deeds, of which he was ostentatiously proud; and on the stage where he played his part—whether tragic or comic—he would always be the prime actor.

Many of the tales which Vidocq related may be found in the memoirs which he afterwards published; but no printed narrative could convey an idea of the hilarity—the enthusiasm—I might say the eloquence with

which he spoke of some of his successful feats. "Do you remember the great burglary at the Batignolles? That was a scheme of robbery and murder on a grand scale. It was soon after I joined the public service—long before it was known that I had anything to do with the authorities. But I was a party consulted as to all the preparations for breaking into the house, for securing the property, and for disposing of any person who should resist. It was determined, *coûte qui coûte*, that the work should be done. The spoil was considerable; and I was named the leader of the expedition. We were all well armed; the arrangements were directed by me, and they were perfect. But I had settled with the police that a certain number of them should be planted in a neighbouring house, and that they were to rush forward and capture us all when I fired a pistol from a window that was pointed out. *L'effraction fut faite*, and I was as busy as the rest in gathering up the spoils. I made my way to the room from whence it had been agreed the pistol should be fired. The police rushed to the doors at the signal, and the whole gang was captured, I among the number. Not one of them had the slightest idea that I had been a party to their betrayal; but murder had been committed before the arrest took place, and two of the robbers were ordered for execution. I saw them on their way to the Place de Grève, as the cart was conveying them to be executed. They recognized me in the crowd. I fancy I saw on their faces the knowledge that I had '*fait leur affaire*.' My depositions were not necessary to their conviction. Tell me, Monsieur Sanson, do you recollect the circumstance? How did they die?" Sanson—"They died cursing their betrayers."

Vidocq gave us an account of the manner in which, while in gaol, he carried on the courtship with his wife. She was a felon like himself, and inhabited a separate and remote prison. Much correspondence passed between them by the collusion and co-operation of keepers and convicts, who fancied they owed a sort of fealty to so distinguished a member of the profession. Each had been well acquainted with the other while carrying on their schemes of fraud, and each came to the conclusion that it would be wiser and better to be the helpers and the instruments rather than the foes and the victims of the law. When both were released and the nuptials celebrated, it was their amusement to recount to each other their hair-breadth escapes and strange adventures, and to moralize on the sweetness of adversity. Vidocq talked of the heroic character of his fiancée, and of the risks she had run and the dangers she had encountered *dans l'intérêt de nos amours*. But he pronounced her a most faithful and a most useful wife; and when Vidocq established himself in Paris as a discoverer and restorer of lost and stolen property—a profession he exercised on his own account, after his connection with the police had terminated—his wife became to him a valuable auxiliary. They were both well acquainted with the mysterious hierarchy of crime.

There was then no criminal under sentence of death, "only," Sanson said, "as you, gentlemen, are interested in such proceedings, you shall, if

you like, have an opportunity of seeing all the details. I will have an *homme de paille* got ready, and if you do me the honour of visiting me at my domicile, where the *mécanique* is kept, I will have my assistants ready, and everything shall be done that would be done at the Place de Grève, so that you may have the means of seeing how efficiently the work is effected." Such an invitation was not to be rejected—to witness a bloodless execution performed by so distinguished a functionary. Our party consisted of the late Earl of Durham, Mr. Edward Ellice, Mr. Dawson Damer, M. Appert, and the writer of these lines. Sanson lived in one of the suburbs of Paris. We went to it along the Canal de l'Oureq. We reached a very pretty cottage, standing alone in a garden kept in high order, full of flowers. The house and windows were painted in gay colours, principally of a bright green, and we were introduced into a well-furnished, nicely adorned apartment, when the host came to welcome us. He told us that his emoluments, once large, had, from the diminished number of capital punishments, been much reduced, and though he had *de quoi vivre*, where-withal to live, his *état* was very different now from what it had been in other—query better (?)—days. This may have been an apology for our finding no repast prepared in return for M. Appert's hospitality. He repeated to us that the office had been for generations hereditary in his race. Marriages had been generally confined to families connected with the same profession, of which there were several in the provinces.

Sanson gave many particulars of what had happened on memorable occasions between the moment when he had received the *condamné* from the prison authorities, and that in which the task was completed by him as the *exécuteur des hautes œuvres*. He stated—and we had afterwards an opportunity of verifying the fact—that the *procès verbaux* of every public execution were kept with the utmost accuracy. He asserted that it had never been otherwise in the worst times of the French Revolution; which most assuredly would prove that the number of sufferers, as ordinarily reported and believed, must have been enormously exaggerated. Possibly all such statistics should be received with much distrust, but in reaching any authentic source of information, one is always impressed with the conviction that political passion on all sides leads to enormous misrepresentation, and reported as they are under the influence of vehement excitement, the records of contemporaneous annalists should be received with much distrust. He repeated again and again that the amount of physical suffering from the fall of the axe and the separation of the head from the body, was exceedingly small—that death was instantaneous—that in the whole of his experience he had never seen a voluntary motion of the muscles after decapitation—that the stories of the opening and closing of the eyelids after execution were inventions contradicted by the whole of his observations, without a single example to the contrary—that the extinction of feeling and of life followed the fatal event immediately and without a single exceptional case.

We asked whether it were possible to see the records—the *procès*

verbaux of executions—of which he had spoken. He produced some volumes, handsomely bound, beautifully written, in whose pages were officialized the details, signed by persons present, of what had taken place at every execution, when the *condamné* was handed over to the *exécuteur*, up to the moment on which the corpse was transferred to those who were commissioned to receive it.

He desired us to accompany him to an outhouse. It was a sort of stable, in the centre of which the *mécanique* raised its awful head; it was painted *blood red*—a tall erect frame, much narrower, much higher than that of a common gallows—a massive sloping knife was suspended at the top, a cord hung down by the side of the frame. The assistants stood on a platform below; just above them was a plank, with a round hole for the reception of the head, at the base of which was an opening, through which the axe was to pass in severing the head from the body. The plank moved backwards and forwards in a groove; it was raised by an axle at the two sides perpendicularly. In an instant the sufferer was attached to it by cords: it was then thrown down flat, and moved horizontally forward; at the same moment the cord was pulled, the heavy axe fell down through the iron frame, and a basket was seen to receive the head of the victim almost as soon as the click was heard announcing that the axe had been detached from the beam to which it had been fastened. Then the plank was drawn back, the headless body untied, and Sanson asked us to feel how sharp was the edge and remark how ponderous the weight of the instrument. The edge was certainly sharp as that of a razor, and the momentum was increased by a mass of lead attached to the upper side of the decapitator. Torture or mishap seemed impossible; and yet on one occasion, at Boulogne, through the blundering of the bourreau, the axe got entangled in the rope, and did not descend with force enough to do the dreadful work, and the head of the poor wretch was severed by a knife borrowed for the occasion. I know a gentleman who, in those days, was under the ban of the Bourbon Government for a political offence, which might have been visited with capital punishment, and who was consoled with the assurance that if decapitation were to be his fate, care would be taken to secure him against any defect in the action of the decapitating machinery.

B.

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